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Women Writing in Question : Politics and Aesthetics in
Margaret Atwood's Novels

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“Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies”

Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa” (137)

Dedications

I dedicate this work to the dearest creatures to my heart, my sons Mohamed Amine and Abderrahmane, to God's heaven on earth my mother and to the one who supported me with love, help and patience to accomplish this work, my husband Yaaqub Boudjadar.

I thank my beloved friends and sisters, Rima and Mounia and my brothers Ramzi and Salah Eddine for their encouragements. To my father and mother, I hope you feel proud of me because my success is yours.

To all the silenced women whose voices have been stolen, whose bodies have been colonized and whose forgiveness have been pushed to the extreme, I dedicate this work.

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I would like to express my deep feelings of gratitude to my supervisor Prof Serir Mortad Ilhem and the board of examiners without whom this work would have never come into light. I feel that prose is poor when it comes to describing an intelligent mind, an understanding attitude and a generous soul when they belong to a woman. I feel my supervisor's acquaintance is a God's gift that helped me learn responsibility through freedom. To the ever young woman whose heart is made of a golden stone, still it surrounds you with support and motherly tenderness, I say thank you.

Abstract

The present research studies three novels by Margaret Atwood which are *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Penelopiad* as woman's texts. It aims at showing how the aesthetic and poetic specificities of her novels entail political messages. The three novels belong to different generic categories and signal important stages in Atwood's development as a woman writer. This study attempts to analyse the aesthetic and intertextual aspects of the aforementioned novels. It examines Atwood's transformations of the three subgenres: the gothic, the dystopia and the epic to uncover the political aims behind their female appropriation by the writer. The three novels outvoice the writer's political interests on two levels: the thematic and the aesthetic. Their paratexts, metafictional nature through the use of self-reflexive narrators and intertextual references all serve the writer's aim of exposing power politics and gender politics in both society and literature writing. In addition, the centrality of the female figure as women writers allow the reader to witness women's issues of marginality, survival, body image and self realisation. The hypertextual nature of Atwood's texts serves their integration in the canon while it retains their singularity as expressions of the human condition through a female subjectivity.

Key words: women's writing, aesthetics, paratextuality, intertextuality, hypertextuality, dystopia, gothic romance, epic, politics.

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General Introduction

The status of women's writing within the literary tradition was not attained until feminism gained ground in the literary scene. The latter contributed to the revival, reanalysis and celebration of the female text that has been relegated to the margin for centuries due to the domination of men over society, arts and the academia

Many women writers were obliged to fight misogynist criticism either in society or literary criticism because they were not supposed to go out of the already defined stereotypes of femininity that persisted in the Western ideology for centuries and became idealised by male literary production.

However when many of women writers who stood in the shadow for decades came into light thanks to twentieth century feminism, a variety of material was rediscovered; consequently, tracing one signal tradition of women's writing as many critics advocated became a hard, almost impossible task. In addition, wide critical attention was directed towards publishing women's literature by periodicals, magazines and presses such as Women's Press, Fireweed and later Virago Press and Pandora Press. Moreover, Scholars' interest in tracing the development and the common characteristics of this new area of investigation resulted in writing interesting works such as Jane Spencer's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* and Dale Spender's *Mother's of the Novel* in 1986. The contribution of feminism to the rise and celebration of women's writing cannot be denied because its literary endeavours granted women's expression its prestigious status among its male counterparts and guided it to reach its present maturity. However, many scholars confine women's

literature in the field of feminist ideology and label any woman's art exposing the female subjectivity as feminist. Many writers devoted their fiction and criticism to the analysis of women's conditions as writers and the discussion of issues such as the female body, gender politics and art creation. One of them is Virginia Woolf whose "A Room of One's Own" placed her at the heart of feminism and forced her to show her rejection of this particular labelling. The other writer who has attracted feminist analysis of her works and many labels, the most important of which has been and will be "a feminist writer" is the contemporary Canadian writer Margaret Atwood.

In fact, Margaret Atwood has shown in several occasions including the interviews conducted with her that she is suspicious about ideological labelling of writers. Her rejection of attributing the feminist ideology to her work is clear because a close analysis of her writings would show that Atwood's interest is broader; it is politics. Atwood has confirmed that she is a political writer in an interview by stating: "I am a political writer" (Fitz Gerald and Crabbe 137).

It is worthy to explain that Atwood's concern with politics is not with the ideological, the institutional or the governmental because she sees politics as the possession and exertion of power in all aspects of human relations being part of the personal or the public sphere. She explains her view in an interview with Jo Brans that politics for her has a close relation with power ascription and exercise; she links it to the nature of relationships between humans including the freedom of expression and the nature of conversations one can have with another (149). Thus, our study will be guided by Atwood's own theorizing of power politics.

Being a prolific writer, Atwood produced novels, short stories, poems, screen plays, critical studies, and books for children and radio scripts and won several prizes for her works.

Her reputation as a successful writer spread over Europe and the United States while some of her works have been translated into 30 languages. Atwood published reviews and critical articles in various eminent magazines and edited many literary anthologies including, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English* (1983) and, with Robert Weaver, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* (1986).

Atwood is known as a writer whose consciousness about the cultural and the theoretical changes happening around her leads her readers to a serious consideration of her novels. She is a literary and political conscious writer who criticises and portrays several phenomena in society; she campaigns for human rights and for the environment. Her reputation is gained through her novels which vary in structure and thematic concerns including the creation of art, sexual politics, the quest for identity, mythology and folktales.

Atwood's literary and critical production is discussed from two outstanding perspectives: postmodernism and feminism. Her status as an experimental writer is, unquestionably, determined, but her place within feminism is a controversial issue that is still being explored despite the writer's refusal to belong to the feminist ideology, this is due partly to the fact that her works share a common characteristic which is the portrayal of female experiences in different times and social situations.

Our research aims to analyse the political aspects of Atwood's fiction by exposing how the textual characteristics of her writing entail political messages. Thus, instead of giving primary importance to the contextual analysis of her fiction we focus on its textuality as a woman's creation that aims at exposing issues of interest to Atwood. Although we do not dig into the context of every novel under analysis, we situate Atwood in her milieu as a Canadian

writer because many of the shared characteristics of Canadian literature appear in her fiction. Due to the limitations of the time allocated to the establishment of this project, our analysis has been selective, but its findings are not exclusive because many traits that define Atwood as a writer reappear in most of her novels. For practical reasons and for their exemplary generic nature, we have chosen to our study three novels from three different stages in Atwood's development as a writer: *Lady Oracle* written in the seventies, *The Handmaid's Tale* in the eighties and *The Penelopiad* after the millennium.

Atwood's novels share some characteristics such as the inclusion of female protagonists, the discussion of art creation by a female artist, the problem of defining one's self in relation to social stereotypes in addition to the alienation, exclusion and the disorder associated with the female's body trial to liberate itself from its gender role. Atwood's third novel *Lady Oracle* bears postmodern traits as the writer employs parody to serve characterisation. The novel's protagonist is a female artist who tries to find her identity through art creation. She uses the same names and retells the same story in different generic forms in an attempt to find a satisfactory version. Towards the end, the characters become confused for the real and the fictional become fused which leads Joan to think of using another genre, science fiction, thus, she leads another journey to find herself. The artist relationship with her mother is significant in the novel for its effect on her psychological development. The issue of female body image is tackled in relation to the protagonist's search for identity. Her quest becomes a desperate trial to constitute new identities, playing different roles and liberating herself by faking her death and returning to life.

The Handmaid's Tale is a dystopian novel which tells the story of a woman called Offred, living in the republic of Gilead that represents an imagination of America in the

future. The novel is written by the protagonist Offred to speak on behalf of the writer. It employs metafiction and deals with political issues such as the rights of individuals in a totalitarian society, the male-female and female-female power relations. In addition, it shows, like most Atwood's novels, how a woman artist is looking for a self definition through art creation.

The Penelopiad was published in 2005 as part of a whole project of rewriting old myths by contemporary writers, however, it appeared as a rewriting of a well-established and a universally influential work: Homer's epic *The Odyssey*. The book challenges Homer's legacy on both formal and thematic levels.

In order not to undermine and devaluate Atwood's artistry, we feel obliged to try to cover the three major subgenres of fiction that she used in the context of women's writing: the gothic, the dystopia and the epic. In addition, any comprehensive reading of her three novels dictates an eclectic approach because of their formal and thematic aspects and the nature and the scope of our research. In analysing Atwood's writing aesthetics and manipulation of literary genres to meet her political ends, we aim to answer the following questions:

- 1-What are the aesthetic aspects of Atwood's novels: *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Penelopiad* that anticipate their generic nature, conceal it or even modify it?
- 2-How does Atwood enter into a dialogue with the literary tradition, mythology and even religion to reach a female-centred voicing of her political interests?
- 3-What are the intertextual relationships between her three novels and other texts in the canon?

4-What are the recurrent political concerns of Atwood's three novels?

5- What are the hypertextual relationships between Atwood's three novels and other texts belonging to their generic categories?

6-How does she alter the three subgenres, the gothic novel, dystopia and the epic to make them part of women's writing and what is the entailed political nature of this shift.

To answer our research questions, we make resort to the French theories of aesthetics, notably, Gerard Genette's "Paratextuality" because Atwood is one of the writers who pay close attention to the Paratext including its visual side such as the title, the epigraph, and the cover's illustration which is usually dictated and selected by the writer herself who used to design the covers of her own books of poetry in her early career. In addition, an analysis of the paratext of her books is done for it is used by Atwood to guide anticipate and even stimulate the reading process. Second, we rely on French structuralist poetics pioneered by Gerard Genette whose theory of "transtextuality" would be an adequate research tool for analysing Atwood's strategies of appropriating the three genres. Finally, in order not to be confined to a textual analysis of her works in isolation, we make advantage of many feminist concepts that help contextualise her works in women's writing and Canadian literature without ascribing the feminist ideology to their writer.

The research work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is devoted to a presentation of feminist criticism to show its contribution to the birth of women's writing and a contextualisation of Atwood's writing in Canadian literature. The second chapter offers a theoretical framework of Gerard Genette's theories of aesthetics, particularly "paratextuality" and "transtextuality". The Third chapter is an analysis of the paratextual elements of

Atwood's novels *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Penelopiad* and their influence on the generic classification of the novels as well as their orientation of the reading process

The penultimate chapter provides an analysis of the intertextual elements in the three novels and their political significance. The last chapter is an attempt to define Atwood as a political writer and woman writer based on textual analysis of her novels, in addition, it aims to expose the hypertextual practices used by Atwood that result in a female appropriation of three literary genres: the gothic, the dystopia and the epic.

Atwood's writing has always been in evolution for each novel signals a stage in the writer's awareness about the world and stands as a unique composition that demands close scrutiny and analysis. Her fiction is highly charged with social and political interests in addition to its exposition of female issues, the fact that makes it part of the female tradition.

Chapter One: Women's Writing in Canadian Literature

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1.1. Introduction

1.2. Feminist Literary Criticism

1.3. Different Voices Enriching the Feminist Spectrum

1.3.1. Anglo American Feminist Criticism

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1.4. Women's Writing in Canada

1.4.1. Canadian Literature: Geographical, Historical and Cultural Traits

1.4.2. Canadian Women Writers

1.4.3. Margaret Atwood: The Literary Celebrity

1.4.3.1. Early Influences Shaping Later Concerns

1.4.3.2. A Woman's Voice and Its Echoes

1.5. Conclusion

1.1.Introduction:

Feminist literary criticism is the discipline credited for the discovery of what is known today as women's writing. It started with a re-evaluation and criticism of the stereotyping of women's images in the literary tradition and moved to a rediscovery of women writers from the past and when the movement gained ground in criticism, its concepts of "feminine writing", "writing the body" and its values of celebrating the female identity and language spread to influence most modern writers without necessarily making them feminists; for most of them refuse allegiance to ideological movements. Margaret Atwood is one of the writers who has benefited from the maturity of the literary critical scene and the celebration of women writers in Canada.

1.2. Feminist Literary Criticism:

Feminism has appeared as a radical movement in literary theory for its questioning of the long-standing standards of the literary canon and criticism as well. It emerged by the late 1960's as an attempt to free literary production and criticism from the control of social notions such as race, class and gender. According to Ellen Messer Davidow: "Intellectually, feminist studies investigate gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class and sexuality as categories that organize social and symbolic systems" (209).

In addition, Feminist criticism seeks to put into question the phallogocentric ideology that dominates the production and evaluation of literature. In doing so, feminist critics visit many disciplines, borrowing theoretical tools or analyzing diverse subjects. Among the various fields used for the feminist endeavour are psychology, philosophy, sociology, history

and literature. Feminist critics' major aim is fighting patriarchal and male-oriented evaluation of literature; they lead, in Toril Moi words, "the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature, at least not if the latter is presented and no more than another interesting critical approach on a par with a concern for sea-imagery or metaphors of war in medieval poetry" (106).

Furthermore, early feminists started with an interest in topics such as women portrayal in literature, their subordination and exclusion from the public sphere. They believed that women are marginalised in society because the social constraints imposed by patriarchy regard women as biologically and intellectually inferior. Consequently, Feminists aim is to reach equality in society, literature and criticism. In the same vein, the critic Jane Flax believes that feminism is "located at the centre of cultural power [...] as an outside discourse, that, a movement born out of the experience of marginality, contemporary feminism has been usually attuned to issues of exclusion and invisibility" (141).

Although feminist critics use various approaches in their analyses, their goals remain parts of a whole spectrum that revises literature from a feminine perspective and re-evaluates women writings and women images either as characters or authors. According to Annette Kolodny:

What unites and repeatedly invigorates feminist literary criticism [...] is neither dogma nor method but an acute and impassioned attentiveness to the ways in which primarily male structures of power are inscribed (or encoded) within our literary inheritance: the consequences of that encoding for women as characters, as readers and as writers; and with that, a shared analytic concern

for a better understanding of the past but also for an improve recording of the present and the future. (162)

It is generally acclaimed that feminism started in the 1960's. However, many women voices appeared long before to denounce male control and domination over society and the literary canon. Mura Jehlen believes that "feminist thinking is really rethinking, an examination of the way certain assumptions about women and the female character enter into the fundamental assumptions that organize all our thinking" (189). Although not organised in an ideological unified movement, such early denouncements of patriarchy, revisions and questioning of literary conventions besides social constraints are all feminist voices in core.

In reference to Jehlen's definition of feminism, we can say that the first writer who criticised women portrayal in literature is the French Christine de Pisan who wrote the courtly poem "L'Epistre au dieu d'amours" (1399) in the fifteenth century to denounce the French theologian Jean de Meun's representation of women in his thirteenth century allegorical poem "Roman de La Rose". Pisan used Cupid in her poem to express her refusal of women abuse by male writers. As a result, many writers and men of thought attacked her including Jean de Montreuil, Provost of Lille. She responded to him in a letter where she wrote: "May it not be imputed to me as folly, arrogance, or presumption, that I, a woman, should dare to reproach and call into question so subtle an author, and to diminish the stature of his work, when he alone, a man, has dared to undertake to defame and blame without exception an entire sex" (56). In fact, Pisan did not stop at criticising phallogocentric literature but she challenged it by writing *Le Livre de La Cité des Dames*.

Later on, Mary Wollstonecraft, being influenced by the ideas of the French revolution, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792 to signal the first woman voice

advocating women rights and equality. Moreover, her work was an attack on Edmund Burke's artificial representation of femininity and a criticism of his theory of beauty. According to Susan Manly: "she attacks the false sensibility that she labels as corrupt and artificial in Edmund Burke's work and she rewrites her own authorial femininity as a regenerated natural discourse of rational, human feeling and ethical imagination" (47).

Indeed, her work was the first woman voice in the eighteenth century that advocated women rights and equality. In Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's words, such work "presents the first fully elaborated feminist criticism of misogynist images of women in literature, as well as the first sustained argument for female political, economic and legal equality" (135). Wollstonecraft pursued her concern with women representation in literature and widened her revision of male dominated thought. She wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* to criticise John Milton's "Paradise Lost", Jean Jacque Rousseau's fifth book of *Emile* and Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.

In the nineteenth century, feminist thinking started to make a link between women situation and slavery but the first to notice such similarity is John Stuart Mill when he wrote, in 1869, in "On the Subjection of Women", "All men except the most brutish desire to have in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave, but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favourite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds" (991). Due to the involvement of feminism in the abolishment movement, such comparison with slavery became frequent in the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century witnessed a tremendous development in feminist criticism. Early feminist critics focused on the study of women portrayal and characterisation in the

male dominated literary tradition and the analysis of the process of stereotyping women images in the patriarchal culture. However, twentieth century feminists became preoccupied with women as art creators and made a shift to a discussion of the socio-cultural factors that determined women status within the literary canon. Among these factors are the social and economic constraints imposed on women writers and the prejudiced, commonly believed, superior male criticism of such feminine works.

Precisely speaking, Virginia Woolf is regarded as an iconic figure at this stage of feminist criticism development. Her publication of "A Room of One's Own" in 1929 provided a new start for campaign against patriarchy in the real world and the literary canon. Her work, which provides an essentialist perception of gender and criticises society for constructing gender roles to promote male supremacy, has become a classic for second-wave feminists. Moreover, Jane Marcus views it as "[their] literary bible" and believes that Woolf is "the undisputed foremother of feminist criticism, the inventor and investigator of the term 'patriarchy' and clearly the model for contemporary feminists in the efforts to refurbish women's literary image" (5).

Another writer who contributed to the development of women writing and the exploration and expression of the feminine experience is Dorothy Richardson. The latter published a novel in twelve volumes starting with the first in 1915, while the last was posthumously published in 1967. Her novel turns around the experiences of the heroine Miriam Henderson which are revealed in a female style. In fact, Richardson's style is highly valued by Virginia Woolf who regards her as the inventor of the feminine psychological sentence. In "Romance and the Heart," Woolf states that Richardson "has invented [...] a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of feminine gender. It is of a more

elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes” (367).

In addition, Simone de Beauvoir published her seminal work *The Second Sex* in 1949 to bring a revolution to feminist thinking. Being influenced by Jean- Paul Sartre's theory that places existence before essence, she states in her work that a woman is not born, but it is the process of socialisation, the culture that places her as inferior to man and assigns her her gender role. Consequently, her identity becomes related to him and evaluated in comparison with him. “He is the Subject, he is the absolute. She is the other” (806).

Simon De Beauvoir treatise attacks social institutions responsible for gender formation and paves the way for other feminists to openly discuss women sexuality. Elizabeth Fallaize argues that

[The Second Sex] had a profound influence on the development of twentieth-century feminism, providing a key theoretical tool in the elaboration of the concept of the social construction of gender and offering a model of feminist enquiry for the theorists [and] literary critics [...] Beauvoir's radical attacks on the social institutions of motherhood and the family together with her frank discussion of female sexuality led to a public furore on the book's publication in France. (85)

Similarly, other works appeared in many parts of the world to express women's anger at the political, social and economic factors responsible for their exploitation and oppression. For example, in America during the 1950's most jobs were occupied by previous soldiers and women were confined to domestic life. Media played a role in promoting an image of the

perfect housewife. It created a feminine mystique that presented the housewife and mother as the ideal image of woman. As a reaction, the feminist movement started to grow in America in the 1960's with the International Women's Liberation movement. In 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* to attack the feminine mystique and describe it as "a world confined to her own body and beauty, the charming of man, the bearing of babies, and the physical care and serving of husband, children and home" (155).

Friedan's work contributed to the emergence of the feminist movement in America for it criticised, in Vincent. B. Leitch's words "the dominant cultural images of the successful and happy American woman as a housewife and mother" (308). The second woman voice that criticised and revised male-dominated literature from a feminine perspective is that of Marry Ellman who criticised the stereotyping of female images in literature in her work *Thinking about Women* (1968). Later, Kate Millet joined her to criticise sexism in literature and power relations or what she termed "politics" in society. She criticises the negative portrayal of women in fiction by many authors including Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and D. H. Lawrence. Being influenced by the civil rights movement, Kate Millet wrote at the beginning of her *Sexual Politics*:

In America, recent events have forced us to acknowledge at last that relationship between the races is indeed a political one which involves the general control of one collectivity defined by birth, over another collectivity, also defined by birth. Groups who rule by birth are fast disappearing, yet there remains one [...] in the area of sex [...] what goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged in our social order, is the birth right priority whereby males rule females" (24-25).

In 1979, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar analysed the psychology of women writers in the 19th century in their critical book *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination*. Both writers believe that nineteenth century women novelists express their own anger and anxiety using certain images and heroines in their fiction. For instance, the mad woman Bertha Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* represents the author's own anxiety and rage.

1.3. Different Women Voices enriching the Feminist Spectrum:

Despite the variety in feminists' methods and theories, they stay united in their suspicious analyses of the social norms and literary conventions since they seek an elimination of the persisting patriarchal ideology that governs society and dominates literary production and criticism. By questioning, reassessing and re-evaluating existing codes, they aim to develop a culture of equality between sexes in arts, to eliminate binary oppositions such as male/female, superior/inferior, logical/sentimental and above all allow women voices to be heard and valued. In this context, Myra Jehlen argues that

Feminist thinking is really rethinking, an examination of the way certain assumptions about women and the female character enter into the fundamental assumptions that organize all our thinking. For instance, assumptions such as the one that makes intuition and reason opposite terms parallel to female and male may have axiomatic force in our culture, but they are precisely what feminists need to question or be reduced to checking the arithmetic, when the issue lies in the calculus. (189)

Although feminists have the same general goals, they can be divided into two schools:

1.3.1. Anglo-American Feminist Criticism:

Anglo-American feminists concentrated in their studies on women as characters and writers. They devoted their works to analyse female characters in fiction and the conditions of female authors. At the beginning of the movement, most of them sought to revise the literary tradition and criticise the stereotyping of women images. They argued that literature was phallogocentric representing women as inferior and passive. Later, English and American feminists turned to revise women's literature in an attempt to reveal the real factors behind the inferiority of female writings in the literary tradition. They believe that such writings were not valued because they have been evaluated by male-centred criticism.

The publication of Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" had a tremendous contribution to the movement. It has become a classic for second-wave feminists for its discussion of the cultural and socioeconomic factors responsible for gender roles' construction. In Woolf's opinion, a woman needs a room of her own and financial independence to be able to produce art. In Margaret J. M. Ezell words: "For Woolf, one essential requirement for being an author was the possession of private physical space for writing, a room of one's own, with a lock on the door, enabling the woman writer to close out the distractions of everyday life as well as her society's definitions and expectations of her as a woman" (79). Moreover, Woolf attacks women exclusion from the public sphere from education at high institutes and artistic life when she writes "It is fairly evident that even in the nineteenth century a woman was not encouraged to be an artist. On the contrary, she was snubbed, slapped, lectured and exhorted" ("A Room of One's Own" 55).

Furthermore, Anglo-American feminists go beyond the analysis of females' images in fiction and the oppression female writers faced; they seek a "selection and further cultivation

of a woman's tradition in literature" (Anglo-American Feminisms 307). Feminist critics try to dismiss male theories and construct new models based on the female experience in order to have a female tradition in literature. In her influential book *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter terms such criticism as "gynocriticism." In her view, the gynocritic should seek a female collective identity of author, character, reader and critic. On the subject, Mary Eagleton writes:

Showalter shift of emphasis is from the female reader's estrangement from male-authored texts to the female reader's identification with female-authored texts. Reader, author and character come together in what Showalter sees as a shared 'female subculture,' in which the focus on women enables new methodologies [...] Showalter called the approach 'gynocriticism' and it became the leading feminist literary mode in the Anglophone academy. ("Literary Representations of Women" 108).

In general, Anglo-American feminists were concerned with the relationship of woman to art either as writer, character or reader.

1.3.2. French Feminist Criticism:

French critics looked into the other disciplines to borrow new terms and theories to serve their feminist aims. For example, Simone De Beauvoir introduced the existentialist philosophy into feminism in her work *The Second Sex*. In the 1970's, other French writers such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva were interested in the relationship of discourse of the female body to the text. They believe that gender differences exist in language. According to C. Belsey and Jane Moore, "Femininity is situated in language and

culture. The difficulty, then, is not with individual men and women but with patriarchy. It is patriarchy that imposes male privilege that prescribes heterosexuality and strives to repress the disruptive excess of alternative sexualities, of unconscious resistance, play and creativity” (10).

Moreover, the French feminist Hélène Cixous introduced the concept ‘écriture féminine’ (feminine writing) in her book *The Laugh of the Medusa* in 1976. Cixous believes that feminine writing is characterised by femininity in sensations, language and style. She believes that the source of this language is the mother-child relationship before the acquisition of language. Chris Weedon argues that “such feminists assume the existence of a naturally different female or feminine language. This language is often rooted in female biology or a female imaginary and it is thought to enable women to articulate an identity freed from colonization” (118).

In the same vein, Luce Irigaray proposed a theory based on the morphology of the feminine genital organs. She holds that a ‘woman’s language’ escapes male phallogocentric monopoly into diversity, fluidity and heterogeneity. Similarly, Julia Kristeva was concerned with language and described male language as symbolic while the female language as semiotic, pre-oedipal and pre-linguistic. French feminists were concerned with the woman relationship with language and the nature of female language. In fact, their concerns can be summarised in Elaine Showalter’s words,

“The appropriate task of feminist criticism [...] is to concentrate on women’s access to language, on the available lexical range from which words determinants of expression. The problem is not that language is insufficient to express women’s consciousness but that women have been denied the full

resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution" ("Feminist Literary Criticism in the Wilderness"341).

Indeed, post-structuralist Feminist Criticism is not based on one theory or has standards; rather it lies in the works of the above mentioned French Feminists notably: Julia Kristeva's *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980), Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) and Hélène Cixous' *The Newly Born Woman* (1986).

Despite the plurality and diversity in their theories and approaches, feminist critics remain united in their aims to re-evaluate women literature, re-examine the criticism it evoked through history and establish a female tradition of both literature and criticism that employs female language, portrays female experience and celebrates the female body.

1.4. Women's Writing in Canada:

1.4.1. Canadian Literature: Geographical, Historical and Cultural Traits:

Margaret Atwood's fiction cannot be studied without situating it within its Canadian context. Her works are part of a self-conscious literary production that evolved to form what is called today Canadian literature. The Latter went through several stages of development to reach the internationally acclaimed status it has today.

Like any other colonial literature, Canadian literature started as adaptations of the artistic norms of the coloniser and imitations of his literary canon. English people read the first works to know about life in the other expansions of the Empire. Thus, most of the colonial literature was about travels, new wild places and history; in other words, travel-writing was widely read by the English intellectuals during the eighteenth and early

nineteenth century. According to Martha Dvorak: “The explosion of travel literature, memoir and historical romance in this early colonial period was produced by a literate elite whose primary ideological identification was with the metropolitan center, which published and distributed their work” (155).

The writers of that period did not live permanently in the colony but their writings were a close mirror of life in colonial Canada. Among them are Frances Brooke who wrote a domestic romance entitled *The History of Emily Montague* in 1769 and John Richardson who published his historical romance *The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas* in 1832. In the early nineteenth century, immigrant writers that settled in Canada produced a literature that reflected an adaptation of the English values in an exotic wilderness. In 1836, Haliburton's *The Clockmaker* became the first Canadian bestseller, Susana Strickland Moodie published *Roughing It in the Bush* in 1852 and the historical romances of Rosanna Leprohan , notably *Antoinette de Mirecourt* (1864) became popular because of their social and historical “témoignage”.

In fact, imitation continued for a long time in Canadian Literary history even when Canada moved into the post confederation stage. Many writers such as Matthew Lewis, Walter Scott and Ann Radcliff continued to be fascinated by the historical fiction produced by the settlers. The works of William Kiby *The Golden Dog* (1877) and Gilbert Parker *The Seat of the Mighty* (1896) were but an extension of the imperialist tradition.

Sara Jeannette Duncan wrote *The Imperialist* in 1904 to mark a turning point in the history of Canadian literature. Such novel raised national awareness of a Canadian identity facing the power of the imperialist and the power of the strong neighbour – the United States-. In Martha Dvorak words: “Her only novel set in Canada, *The Imperialist* is arguably one of

the postcolonial works of fiction Canada can claim, in the sense that it partakes in a set of cultural values and representations that spill over the boundaries between national or even chronological categories" (158). *The Imperialist* started a postcolonial era of works occupied with regional, social, economic and political issues of Canada. *Two Solitudes* (1945) by Hugh MacLennan represents the tensions between Canadians while *Man's Son* (1951) tackles wider political and social problems. In fact, later works such as *The Return of the Sphinx* (1967) show the sensitivity of Hugh MacLennan towards the power of the United States and its cultural threat.

The Twentieth century witnessed a rise of what was termed as "prairie realism". Its most acclaimed writer is Fredrick Philip Grove who wrote *Settlers of the March* (1925), *Our Daily Bread* (1928), *The Yoke of Life* (1930) and *Fruits of the Earth* (1933). When Europe and The USA were celebrating modernist experimentations and innovations in literature, Canadian writers, notably Sinclair Ross and W.O. Mitchell, continued to use prairie realism in writing novels and short stories. Canadian modernism started with writers such as: Elizabeth Smart and Mavis Gallant in addition to Mordecai Richler whose early works portrayed Quebec as discriminating and held traces of American modernists' influence. Her later works, *Joshua Then and Now* (1980) and *Bonney's Version* (1997), were hard to read because of the experimentation in narration and inclusion of several cultural elements. Mavis Gallant won the reputation of one of the best short-story writers in the English language. She published *Green Water, Green Sky* (1959) and *A Fairly Good Time* (1970). Published in 1959, Sheila Watson's *Double Hook* was considered by critics as the first modernist Canadian Novel. One of the key figures of Canadian modernist literature is Ernest Buckler. Indeed, his writing in more than a work paved the way for postmodern writers. The postmodern era came with a revival of historical fiction and the bildungsroman, a rediscovery of popular cultures and

literatures besides the employment of irony. Women voices became stronger as they occupied central roles either as poets, writers, narrators or protagonists.

1.4.2. Canadian Women Writers:

Many women writers such as Carol Shields, Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, Marian Engel, Joan Barfoot and Margaret Atwood participated in shaping and enriching a distinct literary canon known as Canadian literature. It is worth noting that various factors contributed to the flourishing of women writing in Canada in the 1970's. Among which are the rise of nationalism that sought to develop and publicise for a Canadian identity, the government's determination to build and support such Canadian identity and the rise of second-wave feminism in North America. The latter influenced women writers who started to negotiate their status within the literary scene and to claim a better one.

The above mentioned factors led to the rise of a conscious literature that celebrated variety and difference and gave voice to women, aboriginal communities and marginalised groups. Hence, the postcolonial endeavour became linked to the feminist and found support in the political one. In the 1970's, the Canadian government launched programmes to support arts and cultural production especially writing and publishing. In Coral Ann Howells words: "These political initiatives were accompanied by hugely increased funding for the arts at federal and provincial levels, and new structures were put in place to support Canadian writers and publishers" (195).

The three prominent women writers of that period were Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood. They were trying to explore new topics related to gender politics and female identity, to revise Canadian history and mythology from a female

perspective and finally to speak on behalf of the oppressed and the marginalised. In return, Canada celebrated and welcomed the development of such literature and supported it to get international recognition and fame. Moreover, Lorna Irvine believes that these women succeeded because they were “participating in a developing literary tradition, rather than reacting to an already-established one” (24).

Consequently, the high status of women writers in literature was asserted and their voices either literary or critical became valued. They helped the nation build its cultural identity through their works which served as mirrors for Canada and reflections to the outer world. In the same vein, David Staines acknowledges the role Atwood played in writing a literature that mirrors a nation and helps it see itself when he states: “As Atwood discovered her voice as a Canadian writer of poetry, fiction, and literary criticism, she helped the country discover its own life as a literary landscape” (19). Although some critics may consider Staines’s opinion as an exaggeration, Atwood’s writings, being diverse on generic and thematic levels, helped in raising a nation’s self-consciousness about its identity and in showing it to the world. As a critic, Atwood knows the importance of works of art as nation’s mirrors. She argues in *Survival*, “If a country or a culture lacks such mirrors it has no way of knowing what it looks like; it must travel blind” (15).

Women writers of the 1960’s were mothers who knew the difficulty of creating art when conforming to social gender roles and subverting to patriarchy. They centred their fiction on female protagonists who seek to rediscover their identities and reject the feminine stereotypes. For example, Audrey Thomas published *Ms Blood* (1970) and Alice Munro *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971). Margaret Atwood’s *The Edible Woman* (1969) is about a woman artist struggling to find her own identity through fiction writing. Coral Ann Howells argues

that the novel's concern is "storytelling, both the stories themselves and the writing process, for Joan offers us multiple narratives, figuring and refiguring herself through different fictional conventions" (55).

In fact, Atwood creativity was broader than other women writers. She published poetry, short stories and criticism. She noticed long ago, since she was a graduate student, a lack of Canadian literary and critical production and their absence among the literatures taught to students of arts and humanities. The year 1972 saw the publication of her novel *Surfacing* and her critical book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, a thematic work of criticism, which regards survival as a persistent characteristic of Canadian literature. David Staines believes that "with its publication Atwood's reputation was secure throughout Canada..., she had accomplished what she set out to do: forge an identity as a Canadian writer, something almost unique on the Canadian scene" (19).

The importance and success of *Surfacing* is no less than that of *Survival*; for it is a psychological journey towards a feminine Canadian identity. Besides its feminist concerns, it has ecological and cultural ones. By *Surfacing*, Atwood opened a door for other works including Marian Engel's *Bear* (1976) and Joan Barfoot's *Abra* (1978), and set a tradition of writing about wilderness myth that continued till the 1990's. Atwood's talent resides in interweaving the personal and the communal; her fiction, indeed, has been politically, psychologically and literary engaged since its beginning. For example, *Surfacing* is considered as a "Canadian fable in which the current obsessions of Canadians become symbols in a drama of personal survival: nationalism, feminism, death, culture, art, nature, pollution" (Kildare Dobbs 31).

In the 1980's, women writers continued to expose various social problems including those related to sex and ethnic issues. They started experimenting within generic forms and exploring new settings for their stories like Atwood's *Bodily Harm* (1981) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Similarly, Van Herk played a great role in the 1980's by taking women experiences beyond realism into a level of mythology. Her "ambitious project to expand the imaginative territory for feminist fiction sets the tone of women's novels in 1980's, where suddenly "transgression" supplants "subversion" as the key motif" (Coral Ann Howells 203). Van Herk's novels *The Tent Peg* (1981) and *No Fixed Address* (1986) are good examples of her project.

In addition, minority voices began to join women writing and produce novels that were neither biographical nor historical. The Japanese Canadian Joy Kogawa published *Obasan* in 1981, a double ending novel where the "themes associated with traditional Canadian literature are radically recast in [such] ethnic writing" (Jonathan Kertzer 123) and history is revised from a feminine perspective.

The 1990's came to change the cultural scene in Canada. Writers started to revise notions such as nationalism, Canadian identity and culture. Consequently, women writings reflected new concerns with multiculturalism, ethnicity, globalisation and redefinition of the Canadian identity; they were, in fact, diversified and reflective. Precisely speaking, Atwood published a postmodern Gothic romance *The Robber Bride* in 1993 to reflect life in Toronto in the 1990's. The novel uses "tradition Gothic motifs like dark doubles, shape shifters and magic mirrors while it also chronicles Toronto's post war social history with its unique mix of multiculturalism and racism" (Coral Ann Howells 206). Furthermore, Atwood published, in 1996, a feminine revision of history and myth in her historical novel *Alias Grace* which came

as a revision of “the mysterious, the buried, the forgotten, the discarded, the taboo” (Margaret Atwood 19).

Similarly, Carol Shields's novels which blur generic divisions gained her success on an international scale. She won the Governor General's Award in Canada and the American Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Stone Diaries* in 1993. Her works question static identities of female protagonists and fixed forms. In 1997, she published *Larry's Party* which won the British Orange Prize the next year.

In the late 1990's multiculturalism reached its peak in Canada and literature became the voice of many ethnic groups who were marginalised in the past. Women writers published novels that reflected the new multicultural Canadian identity notably Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* (1996), Anita Rau Badami's *Tamarind Mem* (1996), and Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* (1999). Other novels depicted the psychological effects of emigration and the notion of Canada as home. Among these are Anne Michael's *Fugitive Pieces* (1996), Janice Kulyk Keefer's *The Green Library* (1996) and Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk* (2000).

Women's writing continued to be diverse in themes and forms while its major figures experimented with new genres and invested in postmodern territories. New works, including Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* (2000) and Lori Lansen's *Rush Home Road* exposed minority issues in silent distant local settings. Margaret Atwood's historical novel *The Blind Assassin* (2000) came as “A novel looking back at Canadian history, particularly in relation to the 1930's and 1940's, and revealing the detrimental effects of class and gender division. It is also a book about celebrity, and the consequences of rash actions on individuals and families, as well as an experiment in genre and style” (Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson 72).

After 2000, Atwood moved to dystopian fiction; she published a trilogy: *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013). Her speculative fiction, as she prefers to call it, depicts the future results of scientific progress and its effects on humanity and the environment. She also published *The Penelopiad* in 2007 as a novelistic rewriting of Homer's *The Odyssey*.

1.4.3. Margaret Atwood: The Literary Celebrity:

1.4.3.1. Early Influences Shaping Later Concerns:

Margaret Atwood rejects any biographical readings of her works and rejects the idea that her artistic creations are mere reflections of her life as a writer. She believes that the writer is a selective and transformative force; for he/she selects experiences from life and transforms them in his/her ways into material inside works of art. Consequently, the material becomes fictional instead of biographical.

However, an overview of some early experiences in her life is necessary for any reader who pursues a research on her works because they explain her growth and development as a writer and become recurrent themes in her works being fictional, critical or poetic. Her life as a woman in a Canadian culture, early readings, travels around the world, work at different universities, her serious concerns with gender politics, the environment and the progress of science are all factors that made her an influential writer who became a literary celebrity.

Before the age of eleven Atwood's family spent half of each year in the Canadian bush, the fact that made her live an unusual childhood. She was confronted by nature at an early age and did not have a formal regular schooling because of the frequent travels between Ottawa and Toronto. In her article "Travel Back", Atwood recalls that period:

Highway 17 was my first highway, I travelled along it six months after I was born, from Ottawa to North Bay and then to Temiskaming, and from there over a one-track dirt road into the bush. After that, twice a year, north when the ice went out, south when the snow came, the time between spent in tents, or in the cabin built by my father on granite point a mile by water from a Quebec village so remote that the road went in only two years before I was born. (108)

Living in the Wilderness, Atwood had enough time to play with her older brother Harold and read books that were difficult for a child of her age to read. Although she preferred comic books and pocketbook mysteries (Cook 25), her readings included myths, legends and fairy tales in their original forms. In fact, Atwood herself acknowledges the freedom given to her as a reader since an early age and the role it played in raising her consciousness as a writer later. In *Negotiating with the Dead: a Writer on Writing*, She recalls that period of her life saying: “[N]o one ever told me I couldn’t read a book. My mother liked quietness in children, and a child who is reading is very quiet” (Atwood 7).

Later on, Atwood used the library in her father’s basement for a long time. Reading has become a lifelong habit for Atwood whose literary criticism will be thematic and selective due to an acquired freedom of choice in reading. It is surprising that Atwood started writing literature at a very early age, precisely speaking, before she went to school.

After spending six years in Ottawa, Atwood’s family spent the year 1945 in Sault St. Marie when her father occupied the position of a director of insect laboratory. That year saw the first literary work of Atwood; the child who had not yet gone to school. She wrote a collection of poems entitled “Rhyming Cats” which is now among Atwood papers at the University of Toronto.

Atwood skipped grade 7 and spent 6 and 8 at Bennington School. In grade 9, she joined the Leaside High School where she started writing for the school newspaper. As a writer, she had a sense of humour that appeared in her "Three Cheers for Coronal" which was about women who smoke. Other works from that period include a poem and two short stories published in "A Quiet Game", and the poem "Representative" that was written about 1956 and published in the collection *First Words*.

When Atwood was at Victoria College at the University of Toronto, she met people who liked her as a friend and contributed in developing her intellectual life. Her friend Douglas Fertherling describes her in his memoir as follows:

Peggy was loyal to all her friends. Loyalty was the most attractive of her many attributes. It was the rarest and the one people would most like having themselves. When peggy was your friend, she was your friend for life and what's more, in a world of impractical poets, she was worldly-wise in the extreme. (238)

Atwood also became a friend of Jay Macpherson, a lecturer and poet who allowed her to use her home library that was full of poetry collections. Atwood was influenced by her teacher Northrop Frye's ideas and Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*. In addition, the intellectual freedom she lived since childhood allowed her to develop her creative talent and embrace writing instead of playing the gender role assigned to women and subverting to social norms.

Atwood was an active college student who wrote articles for the college newsletter *Acta Victoriana* and used to read her poetry at a small coffeehouse named the Bohemian Embassy. The latter provided an audience for many poets including Milton Acorn,

Gwendolyn McEwen and George Miller. Though, she was still a student, Atwood was professional at presenting her poetry. On her performance, Edward McCourt writes: "Atwood had a fully formed style and a manner of presentation that was completely professional. She would drone on with 'no inflection in her voice' - and you could hear a pin drop. It made you think about the words" (193).

By 1959, Atwood has already been publishing her works. Along with David Donnell, she worked on her first chapbook entitled *Double Persephone*. In addition, she published in the literary magazine *Canadian Forum* two poems entitled: "fruition" and "Small Requiem". Being a creative young woman, Atwood wrote poems, lyrics of plays and designed covers for some plays such as *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1959, *The Silent Woman*, *The Mikado* and *The Yeomen of the Guard* in 1961. Under the pseudonym Bart Gerard, Atwood illustrated a comic series for *This Magazine* in 1970.

Since her early years, Atwood learnt how to live in harmony with nature and preserve its wild beauty. During summers, Atwood worked as a camp counsellor in Camp White Pine in Halliburton, Ontario. Moreover, she took the job of a waitress on an island at Camp Hurontario. Her summer experience, especially at Camp White Pine, gave her the chance to encounter some intellectuals and develop lifelong friendships with them. Among the people Atwood met there are Rick Salutin, who was a writer and editor, and Rosalie Abella who worked at the Supreme Court of Ontario.

After obtaining her Bachelor's degree, Atwood travelled in 1961 to the USA where she entered Radcliffe College as she got Woodrow Wilson fellowship, the second year she got a Canada Council grant. When Atwood took her Master's degree, she travelled to Harvard to pursue her studies of Victorian literature from 1962 to 1963 and 1965 to 1967. Her aim was

obtaining a PhD degree but she could not finish her studies because she was occupied by writing poems and fiction instead of doing academic research.

At Harvard, Atwood experienced the limitations her gender identity as a woman would impose. Her determination to become a writer was considered by her fellow students as a wrong decision for a woman. In addition, Harvard as an institution imposed some constraints that were shocking for a liberated mind such that of Atwood. It was a phallogocentric institution that believed males' intellectual superiority. For example, women were not allowed to teach at Harvard University and girl students could not enter the Lamont Library. On the topic Atwood writes in her essay "The Curse of Eve":

I always felt a little like a sort of wart or wan on the great male academic skin. I felt as if I was there on sufferance –Harvard, you know, didn't hire women to teach in it, so the male professors were all very nice. We ladies were no threat. There was a joke among the Women students that the best way to pass your orals was to stuff a pillow up your dress, because they would all be so terrified of having parturition take place on the Persian rug that they would just ask you your name and give you a pass. (77)

Atwood studied a year at Harvard, and then went back to Toronto where she worked as a cashier in a restaurant. In 1963, she found another job in Canadian Facts Marketing, a company that designed consumer surveys.

In September 1964, Atwood occupied the position of a teaching faculty at the University of British Columbia. She taught two courses: "The Whistle-stop" course from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot and grammar to engineering students. Living alone in Vancouver,

Atwood concentrated on writing as she drafted her novel *The Edible Woman* and wrote poetry.

1.4.3.2. A Woman's Voice and its Echoes:

Atwood has grown to be an acclaimed writer whose insight into the political, the social and the personal made her a representative of the writers of her age. Robert Fulford describes her in "The Images of Atwood" as follows:

Representing Margaret Atwood is like representing a dynasty of writers. I am always racing to keep up with her. There are some important things that have to be said. This woman is larger than life. This woman is a genius, she is magnificent in what she creates and the expanded and exquisite way she lives her life. (200)

Since her early career as a novelist, Atwood has begun to attract critical and media attention. After publishing three novels, the appearance of *Life Before Man* in 1979 contributed a lot to her literary fame. In 1984, Atwood moved to Germany to participate in German Arts Council Program for foreign artists. During the summer of that year, she settled in a permanent residence near the University of Toronto.

The eighties were productive and rewarding for Atwood as a literary celebrity. She won many prizes including The Giller Prize and the Governor General's Award. She was also nominated Mrs. Magazine's Woman of the Year and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1987. In addition to her literary celebrity, Atwood was an environmentalist whose bounds to nature were created since childhood.

In the summer of 1991, Atwood taught Canadian culture at Clarendon College, Oxford. Her lectures were published by Clarendon Press under the title *Strange Things: the Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* in 1995. Atwood was known for her professionalism, activity and hard work. In describing her character, Mary Irving writes:

From Atwood's novels it is hard to know what a truly warm, sympathetic and kind person she is. Her patience and courtesy with strangers at book signings, reading, public appearance are never failing. She will stay on the task till every last reader has been greeted and sent away happy with an Atwood autograph even after a long reading, a longer question and answer session, and probably days of arduous travel before and after. She has an enormous zest for life and for new experiences. (74)

Atwood was awarded the Booker Prize for her novel *the Blind Assassin* in 2002. Moreover, she received many honorary degrees and doctorates from several universities such as Toronto, Harvard, Cambridge and L'Université de La Sorbonne Nouvelle. As a writer, she got an international fame and her works are valued not only by English speaking nations. For instance, she was awarded Prince of Austria's Prize for Literature in 2008 and two years later, Dan David Prize in Israel and Nelly Sachs Prize in Germany. In 2012, she was given Queen Elisabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in Canada.

The diversity in the criticism of Atwood's fiction is partly due to the richness of her works and their multidimensional nature. The interplay between the personal and the political, the revision of the mythical and the historical and the feminisation of language and genre have made different echoes in almost all the areas of literary criticism. We present the development of her fiction and its criticism in three stages:

-Stage One:

Margaret Atwood's career as a writer begun in the seventies with writing poetry, however her position as an acclaimed writer is obtained by her fiction in particular. Her early novels attracted critical attention for the correspondence of their issues with the interests of second wave feminism. Consequently, most of the criticism devoted to her fiction was feminist despite her disavowal of forcing political interpretation on her art. Her first novel *The Edible Woman* that was published in 1969 discussed issues related to the female body, the feminine identity in relation to the other and educated women choices in the early seventies. However, Atwood reacted to critics by disclaiming any feminist interests in the novel:

Actually, the timing of *The Edible Woman* was kind of an accident. I actually wrote it in '64-'65 and Jack McClelland lost the manuscript, although that's not his story. He said somebody else lost it. It wasn't around for a while, let's put it that way. I was so busy passing my orals that I didn't have a lot of time to think about it. So it actually came out in 69 and it *was* strange timing. It was right on the edge, so much so that there were basically two kinds of reviews. The ones that didn't know feminism had arrived said, 'This is a novel by a very young writer, but she will become more mature and take a more balanced view of things later'! The critics that did know about feminism responded accordingly. It was quite an interesting experience being there at that time, because you got all the hysterical reactions to feminism dumped right on you or, to be more accurate, I got them dumped on me.

The publication of *Surfacing* in 1972, strengthened Atwood's recognised status among an evolving women literature that was accompanied by a rise in consciousness about

women issues in different cultural scenes due to the demands of second –wave feminists to overcome misogyny and have a celebrated female tradition. The novel's concern with identity redefinition, ecology and nationalism and its unnamed narrator's psychological and physical search for the self attracted different critical reactions; most of which are culturally bound. For example, in the Canadian context, the novel was linked to nationalism according to Atwood while in America it was considered by critics as "almost exclusively as a feminist or ecological treatise" (Articulating the Mute 117). Hammond, Karla, "Articulating the Mute", in *Margaret Atwood: Conversations*, ed. Earl G. Ingersoll, Princeton, 1990, 109-20.

Among the critics who reacted to Atwood's second novel with appreciation are Elaine Showalter and Donna Gerstenberger. The former believes in the beneficial role of *Surfacing* in raising female students' consciousness about women's literature and about themselves in an academic literary context while the latter reads the novel from a structuralist view that values its use of language to express the protagonist's alienation. *Lady Oracle* that appeared in 1976 is a parody of gothic romances. It is a postmodern text that explores the intersection between femininity and art creation. All the impediments related to writing as a feminine creation or the latter's results in biographical and misogynist readings are major concerns of the novel. In 1979, Atwood published *Life before Man*, a novel that did not receive much critical acclaim as its predecessors and followers. As Carol Beran states "Many Atwood scholars have found *Life Before Man* as problematic as the early reviewers". *Bodily Harm* appeared in 1981, a novel concerned with the body, the disengagement from and witnessing social flaws in addition to the impossibility of detaching oneself from society.

The first stage in Atwood's writing as a novelist was marked by a growing concern with the feminine, the social and the environmental; themes that will reoccur in her coming

novels and shape her identity as a writer conscious about the implications of ideology on individuals and communities.

-Stage Two:

The publication of Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* in 1985 marked a turning point in the writer's career. The novel's thematic and generic qualities established her as an ideologically engaged female writer who challenged male dominance over the genre of dystopia. As a futuristic novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* shows the logical endings of some religious, ecological and political practices in America. Although many critics preferred to situate the novel within science fiction to escape the possibility of the future it describes and interpreting it as merely imaginative science fiction, Atwood prefers to call it speculative fiction as she believes in its depiction of a possible future of America.

In fact, David Staines goes further to offer explanations for the connection of the novel as Canadian imagination to America as a neighbour nation when he states:

Perhaps only a Canadian, a neighbor as well as an outsider to the United States, could create such an unsettling vision of the American future. In implied contrast to Gilead is its northern neighbor, once again the final stop of a new underground railroad, this time one that smuggles handmaids to the freedom of Canada. Readers may wish to shy away from Atwood's warning about the present, which leads to Gilead, preferring to regard the book only as science fiction. But the heroine realizes that mankind, unable to bear very much reality, escapes into the hope that reality is only fiction. (21)

Moreover, Staines uses Marshal McLuhan's characterization of Canadian Literature to highlight the simultaneous connection and detachment that exist between Canadians and

America. McLuhan remarks that “Canada has no goals or directions, yet shares so much of the American character and experience that the role of dialogue and liaison has become entirely natural to Canadians wherever they are. Sharing the American way, without commitment to American goals and responsibilities, makes the Canadian intellectually detached and observant as an interpreter of American destiny”(227).

In the midst of a growing critical interest in Atwood's works in the eighties that was signalled by the publication of a number of volumes that took her production as their sole subject, *The Handmaid's Tale's* success went beyond the literary critical scene. The novel was adapted into a Hollywood movie and later into a worldwide successful opera in addition to its use in literary, social, and economic pedagogical contexts. On her part, Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson solicits attention to the novel's status in the tradition of dystopia and its value even beyond its original generic nature when she contends that “It is the only one of Atwood's novels to expand beyond its original format in this way and this is testament to its enduring legacy. The novel's power resides in its clear depiction of a future dystopia, a vision that recalls earlier dystopias such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984* and Evgeny Zamyatin's *We*” (53).

The eighties witnessed a remarkable rise in the critical production devoted to Atwood and a coterie of critics became known as Atwoodian scholars notably Coral Ann Howells and Arnold. E. Davidson. Furthermore, Margaret Atwood society was established and it started its regular publication of a newsletter on the author. In the early eighties critical responses to Atwood's works focused on her poetry, for example, Jerome H. Rosenberg wrote a monograph, entitled *Margaret Atwood*, which focus was the study of her poetry in addition to Frank Davey who published another monograph under the title *Margaret Atwood: A Feminist Poetics*, a work that devoted close attention to her poetry as well. However, the first critic

who attempted to make a link between Atwood's poetry and fiction is Barbara Hill Rigney when she published in 1987 a monograph entitled *Margaret Atwood*. A year later, two collections of essays on Atwood's works were published: *Critical Essays on Margaret Atwood* that contained various approaches to her writings and *Margaret Atwood: Vision and Forms* that discussed her ideology as a writer who is politically and environmentally engaged and offered the readers an interview with Atwood, a short autobiography given by Atwood herself and a conversation with students. In analysing the criticism wrote on Atwood, Macpherson maintains that the collection "presents a good example of Atwood criticism, in that it addresses the range of her work and also seeks to offer up Atwood's own voice against the voices of the critics" (114).

In 1988, Atwood published *Cat's Eye* that received differing critical views due to the elusive nature of truth in the novel. The latter's thematic concerns include women's relation to art, in this case visual arts, and to each other particularly young girls. It was read as an autobiography, an antifeminist statement and became her most known novel. In Macpherson view, "The novel explores 1950s Canada, the regulation of gender and gendered behaviour, the failure of the individual to understand herself, and the many interpretations of both art and autobiography. Here, art as visual art and art as literary art are very much connected; both are read – or misread – in a variety of ways" (59).

By publishing *The Robber Bride* in 1993, Atwood opines that she is far from being a feminist novelist. It was interpreted by critics as a post-feminist novel. It revises many of the themes tackled in Atwood's early books and succeeds in portraying woman as capable of doing evil and causing harm. A throng of critics consider the novel's major character Zenia as hard to classify for she defies usual feminist stereotyping of women images. She is introduced to the reader as a ghost who is in Macpherson view "outside the realm of good versus bad"

(67). Moreover, she extends her judgement to assert that “it is not possible finally to assign clear roles to any of Atwood's characters, and feminism itself is a contested programme in *The Robber Bride*, coming up in unexpected and not entirely comfortable ways” (67).

The second stage in Atwood's growth as a writer is characterised by an exploration of women's relation to art, being literary or visual, and gender politics as part of power politics. The latter is deeply analysed in her first dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale* which brought her critical acclaim regarding the long tradition of dystopia as a male dominated genre. Similarly, it is during this stage that Atwood succeed in overcoming the critics' enforcement of feminism over her oeuvre by defying the binary oppositions related to female portrayal in fiction. In both, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Robber Bride*, the oppressor is a woman while anti-feminist and post-feminist claims are explicitly present in these novels respectively. Obviously, the eighties saw a boom in Atwood's criticism and academic scholarship devoting entire guides, collections of articles, monographs and newsletters for the study of her oeuvre from different perspectives among which feminism is the dominant.

-Stage Three:

In the mid nineties Atwood has become artistically mature enough to challenge history, myth and literary tradition. She has grown into a multifaceted artist whose wit in writing different types of fiction masterfully has become unquestioned on thematic and aesthetic levels. The publication of her novel *Alias Grace* in 1996 marked another stage in her development for two reasons: first, it is a rewriting of history from a woman's angle where truth is elusive and relative, a recurrent theme in Atwood's oeuvre, and the novel's protagonist is Grace Marks, a famous figure in Canada's history who has been convicted of murdering her boss. Coral Ann Howells states that the novel “tells history from a feminine perspective, challenging and resisting the discourse of masculine authority which constitutes

official historical accounts” (140). Second, the novel's writing technique was postmodern, adapted to the writer's purpose of providing the reader with fragmented elusive, questionable reality as he becomes involved in reality construction process. Indeed, the critics' attempts to categorise the novel resulted in differing views. For example, Coral Ann Howells contends that “Atwood's appropriation of traditional patchwork art highlights her postmodern reconstruction of history, which is presented here as a ‘patchwork’ of conflicting evidence from which the reader has to arrange a meaningful design” (153). Similarly, Jennifer Murray believes that the novel has a quilting technique while Christie March reads it as a mosaic.

The nineties are marked by a constant rise in the production of the criticism of Atwood's fiction which remains revisited by critics from different schools trying to uncover the mysteries of her successful artistry. In fact, the criticism written on Atwood at that stage can be divided into two main streams: criticism of the text and criticism on the literary celebrity. The former contains monographs, including Sharon Rose Wilson's *Margaret Atwood's Fairy-Tale Sexual Politics*, Eleonora Rao's *Strategies for Identity: The Fiction of Margaret Atwood*, J. Brooks Bouson's *Brutal Choreographies: Oppositional Strategies and Narrative Design in the Novels of Margaret Atwood* and Shannon Hengen's *Margaret Atwood's Power*, and edited collections notably Colin Nicholson's *Margaret Atwood: Writing and Subjectivity*. All the aforementioned works appeared in 1993 to 1994 looking at Atwood's works from different theoretical stances, the fact that highlights the multidimensional nature of Atwood's oeuvre.

Furthermore, some of the works that were published on her fiction during the nineties will be revised to fit the change in her production which keeps critics at a race with the text itself to solve its enigmatic elusive nature. For example Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson explains the reappearance of second editions of works devoted to Atwood's fiction, including Coral

Ann Howells' *Margaret Atwood* that was published in 1996 and revised in 2005, as "a testament to the continued interest in Atwood's writing – as well as her productivity – that publishers seek second editions to critical texts that are no longer in print" (117). In addition, she quotes Howell's own justification for updating her work on Atwood when she writes, "In [the] second edition Howells argues that Atwood's novels 'are characterised by their refusals to invoke any final authority as their open endings resist conclusiveness, offering instead hesitation, absence or silence while hovering on the verge of new possibilities'" (117).

The second type of the criticism devoted to Atwood as a literary celebrity includes a number of published interviews conducted with her such as Earl Ingersoll's edited collection *Margaret Atwood: Conversations* and two unauthorised biographies: *Margaret Atwood: A Biography*, by Nathalie Cooke and Rosemary Sullivan's *The Red Shoes: Margaret Atwood Starting Out*.

Atwood enters the millennium with another rewriting of history in *The Blind Assassin*. She reshapes the period of 1930's and 1940's in a multilayered narrative where memory plays with the reader who constructs the story from several resources and compares them to the recounting of the narrator. The novel contains different voices weaved in various generic narratives that contribute to the reader's construction of the story while the truth remains uncertain. It won her the coveted Booker Prize after several nominations and established her reputation as an internationally acclaimed writer. In 2003, she published *Oryx and Crake*, another dystopia, in which her ecological concerns are combined with an exposition of the unethical consequences of scientific progress notably genetic engineering. The novel is the first in a trilogy as it will be followed by *The Year of the Flood* in 2009 and *Maddaddam* in 2013.

Atwood did not only rewrite history, she published in 2005 a short novel entitled *The Penelopiad* in which she rewrote the *Odyssey* giving the narrative voice to Penelope the wife of Odysseus and her hanged maids. Atwood rewriting mythology from a feminine perspective came as a questioning of phallogentrism in the literary tradition and the possibility of having a fixed truth about human experience. It is another Atwood's work that goes beyond its original form and becomes adapted into a theatrical play.

Atwood continued to offer her critics new areas of investigation with each new publication. Some of them continued exploring her early novels whereas others trace the development of her writing in relation to other theories in works such as Fiona Tolan's *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* and Jacqueline Bardolph's *Telling Stories: Postcolonial Short Fiction in English*. In 2000, Reingard M. Nischik published a collection of different materials by and about Atwood including her photos and cartoons, other writers' views of her and articles. Edited collections include Coral Ann Howells' *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood* in 2006, Sharon Rose Wilson's *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations* and Harold Bloom's *Margaret Atwood* in 2009.

1.5. Conclusion:

Being a prolific writer for decades, Atwood wrote different genres including poems, short stories, novels, plays, children's books and criticism. In fact, she is the most studied contemporary writer from school syllabi to postgraduate research to critical publications. She has become an international literary celebrity whose works circulate in the world either in English or after being translated into more than thirty languages.

Chapter Two:

Gerard Genette's Theories of

Aesthetics and

Transtextuality

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2.1. Introduction:

As a contemporary theoretician and writer, Gerard Genette is not wide known and his concepts, despite their popularity in France, are not wide used by English speaking critics. However, the systematic nature of his aesthetics and poetics proved their practical and fruitful results in several areas of literary analysis. Strikingly, they are not used in Atwoodian studies.

2.2. Gerard Genette's Poetics and Aesthetics: A Theoretical Background

Poetics is among the schools of thought that date to Aristotle, however, the merit of its development as a systemised literary critical school goes to the French theorist Gerard Genette who developed structuralist poetics in France. As a literary critic, his broader interest is the systemisation of a literary criticism that takes literature as a whole connected system rather than a group of individual works. In *Palimpsests*, he writes "the ability to constitute a system is precisely the characteristic of any set of signs, and it is this constitution that marks the passage from pure symbolism to the strictly semiological state" (Genette, 30). Commenting on Genette's statement, Graham Allen writes "Semiology and structuralism appear to be defined by the desire to study the life of cultural sign-systems. Genette's statement concerns not individual symbols or individual works but the ways in which signs and texts function within and are generated by describable systems, codes, cultural practices and rituals" (Graham Allen 95).

Genette's structuralism started with an investigation of narratology in his early works including: "Discours du récit" in 1972 which was translated into English as "Narrative

Discourse: An Essay in Method" in 1980. He moved to an analysis of the literary language in his *Figures* that were collected and translated into English as *Figures of Literary Discourse* in 1982. Genette's interest in poetics continued in the area of literary genres and led to the production of his work *The Architext: An Introduction* in 1992 which came as a revision of the theory of genre since Aristotle and corrected many misconceptions concerning modes and genres and even the division of literary genres themselves. *The Architext* was followed by *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, the two works reassured Genette's status as the most prominent theoretician of structuralist poetics. In *Palimpsests*, Genette developed his theory of transtextuality.

Genette's theory changed many concepts concerning the literary work for it made a shift from analysing the work as an independent entity into the analysis of a whole related system of literary texts. Graham Allen comments on Genette's criticism by writing: "Literary works, for a theorist like Genette, are not original, unique, unitary wholes, but particular articulations (selections and combinations) of an enclosed system. The literary work might not display its relation to the system, but the function of criticism is to do precisely that by rearranging the work *back into its relation to the closed literary system*"(96).

Genette's contributions to literary criticism continued when he made a shift to the study of Aesthetics with the publication of his work *Paratexts* in 1987 which advanced his notion of paratextuality that was previously introduced as part of the five elements that constitute transtextuality. The latter is defined in *Palimpsests* by Genette as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (1) and was divided into five categories: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architextuality.

For practical reasons that may contribute to a logical presentation of our research, we have decided to present the five notions in an order that makes our research later appear in a logical organisation. Obviously any analysis of a work will start with its paratext, so we proceed from the most concrete aspects to the most abstract and broader ones.

2.2.1. The Concept of Paratextuality:

The notion of “paratextuality” was introduced into literary criticism by Gerard Genette in his book *Paratexts*. The latter was published as part of his broader project of poetics of transtextuality. We call paratext all the elements that surround a text (either in prose or verse). According to Genette a text is “rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions such as an author’s name, a title, a preface [and] illustrations.” (1)

These productions that present the text to its reader and make it a book constitute “more than a boundary or a sealed border, [they are] a threshold”(2) and they appear in two ways: first, they can be inside the book or around the text such as the cover, the name of the author, the title, the preface, tables and illustrations...etc. These elements are called **the p ritext**. However, when the productions are separate from the work and do not appear in the book, they form what we call **the  pitext**. The latter can be either a part of media (interviews, conversations) or private communications (letters and diaries).

The paratext consists of both the p ritext and the  pitext and Genette determines its importance in the role it plays for the text when he states:

The paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that

constitutes its *raison d'être*. This something is the text [...] the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence (12).

Thus, the paratext is not important in itself but the aim of its existence or analysis lies in helping the reader reach a better understanding of the text or at least make prepositions and hypotheses about it before the act of reading.

2.2.2. The Functions of the Pratext:

Genette believes that the paratext is "a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that [...] is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (2). Indeed, Genette's theory defines the paratext's functions in general terms such as facilitating the process of reading and also controlling it when he quotes Philippe Lejeune in describing the paratext as "a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text"(2).

In 1994, Daniel Peraya and Marie-Claire Nyssen offered a detailed division of the functions of the paratext in their study entitled *Les Paratextes dans Les Manuels d'Economie et de Biologie: Une Première Approche*. The most important functions are the following:

- The Function of Learning:

It solicits directly the learner and imposes on him an activity more than just reading and understanding the text. The combination text/ paratext becomes a resource in an organised learning activity.

- The Functions of Representation:

They characterise those paratexts that visualise a textual referent; they do so in four ways:

First, when the paratext assures a global representation of the textual referent, it has a function of global identification. Second, when it defines the textual referent by visualising certain traits that characterise the class to which the referent belongs, it has a function of analytical identification. Moreover, if it represents particular aspects of the textual referent, it has the function of specific identification. Finally, when the paratext offers a particular representation of a general class to serve as example for it, it has the function of identification by extension.

-The Functions of Information:

They can be classified into four categories:

*** The Function of Constructed Information:**

The paratext plays a role in the global construction of the meaning of the text.

***The Function of Principal Information:**

It offers information which does not exist in the text, so, the principal informing elements exist in the paratext.

***The Function of Secondary Information:**

The paratext gives secondary information which does exist in the text, rather in the paratext.

***The Function of Bibliographical Information:**

It states the bibliographical reference of a quote or a work.

- The Diaphonic Function:

It is the function of the paratext that resumes in form a condensed fragment of the text.

- The Aesthetic Function:

The paratext does not have an explicit functionality in relation to the text either as a resource or referee; it can motivate by its polysemy (Peraya and Nyssen10).

2.2.3. Temporal Positions of the Paratext:

According to Genette's theory, any paratext of any work has one of four temporal positions:

- Prior Position:

It can appear before the publication of the work such as announcements and elements published in magazines and newspapers that may be deleted when the work is published later.

- Original Paratext:

It appears with the text's publication.

- Later Paratext:

It appears in later editions like a preface.

- Posthumous Paratext:

Elements that appear after the death of the author (Genette 5-6).

2.2.4. Titology:

An important paratextual element is the title of the work and the subtitles for they guide the relation between the work and the reader since a title is never chosen arbitrarily, on the contrary, it is selected by the author or the publisher for a specific function that we discuss later in details.

2.2.4.1. Definition:

According to Leo H. Hoek, one of the modern founders of titology, a title is “an artificial object, an artifact of reception or of commentary, that readers, the public, critics, booksellers, bibliographers...and titologists [have selected] from the graphic and possibly iconographic mass of a “title page” or a cover” (quoted in Genette 56).

In fact, the relation between the title and the text it represents is complex and depends on the purpose of the author in choosing a specific title, generally, after the text is completed. Thus, the literary title is as important as the literary work and it demands close attention from the reader to be able to understand the relation that links a title to its work. In John Fisher's words “titles say something about the work as well as the alleged sitter or the intention of the artist” (292). In addition, Fisher emphasises the role of a title in interpreting the work and understanding the intention of the author. In his view,

[Titles] are names for a purpose, but not merely for the purpose of identification and designation, in spite of the important practical role which indexical names play in the designative process. The unique purpose of titling is hermeneutical: titles are names which function as guides for interpretation [...] a title is not only a name, it is a name for a purpose (288-289).

The reader does not understand the reason behind the choice of the literary title unless he has completed the process of reading for the title raises questions, creates suspense and attracts the reader but the significance of those opening words becomes clear as he advances in reading the work, however, clarity depends on his ability of analysis and interpretation.

2.2.4.2. Functions of Title:

A literary title has always a message to convey to the reader either in an explicit or implicit way. Based on Charles Grivel's suggestion of the title's functions, Leo Hoek's definition established three major functions of the title when he defines it as "a set of linguistic signs [...] that may appear at the head of a text to designate it, to indicate its subject matter as a whole, and to entice the targeted public"(quoted in Genette 76). However, Genette extended the three functions into applicable classification of titles that allows the critic to use the theory in a practical way.

- Designation:

The title is used to designate the book without having a semantic relationship for the relation between the title and the text is identification in a conventional way. Genette believes that "in actual practice, identification is the most important function of the title" (80) which is an obligatory one.

- Description:

*** Thematic Titles:**

They are titles that are related to the theme of the work in different ways either by referring to a place, an object, a symbol or a motif or by naming a character. "They are not

themes strictly speaking but elements of the diegetic universe of the works for which they serve as titles”(81).

In order to classify a title as thematic, the reader needs to understand the text and analyse the title in a way that reveals its thematic relation to the text by referring to something central, marginal or ironically referring to something missing in the text.

***Literal Titles:**

They directly designate the central theme, character or object of the work.

***Titles attached by Synchdoche or metonymy:**

They refer to something marginal but symbolically important.

***Metaphoric Titles:**

They have a symbolic relation to the work, in fact, they are not conventional symbols but ones used by the writer to evoke something.

***Ironic Titles:**

Having antiphrastic nature, they are used by the writer to refer to something missing in the work. [They] display a provocative absence of thematic relevance”(83). According to Genette, some of these types are not exclusive for metaphor and metonymy may overlap and the interpretation of the title depends on the critic's reasoning. He believes that ambiguity may exist when the critic disregards the symbolic nature of some words and reduces them to their literal meanings or when words have double meanings in addition to “the presence in the work of a second-degree work from which it takes its title, so that one cannot say whether the

title refers thematically to the diegesis or, in a purely designative way, to the second-degree work" (Genette 84).

* **Rhematic Titles:**

They are generic titles used since a long time to refer to poetry such as satires and elegies, to collections of essays, tales and novellas and to other works such as memoirs and confessions. They might be used in plural or singular like autobiography, journal and dictionary (86). Some titles that are invented by the authors to designate new genres are termed by Genette paragenetic including titles like *Meditations*, *Harmonies* and *Situations* (by Sartre) (86).

* **Mixed Titles:**

Genette shows that some thematic titles may become rhematic due to frequent use like the example of Sartre's *Situations*. If it appeared a third time, it would have become a title for a new genre. Mixed titles contain two parts: the first is usually rhematic and the second is thematic. "All titles of this kind begin by designating the genre and therefore the text, then go to designate the theme" (89). Genette believes that there is no opposition between thematic and rhematic types in terms of functions. They both use a characteristic of the text (either thematic or rhematic) to describe it. Such function is called the descriptive function.

- **Temptation:**

Another function of the title is tempting the public to read the book. However, there is no rule which states that a title is good or not. Successful titles might be those which are strange, those that contradict with the subject matter, the ones that properly describe it or merely hints at it. In fact, there are no criteria that define a title as tempting or not. In Gotthold

Ephraim Lessing's view, "A title must be no bill or fare. The less it betrays of the contents, the better it is." In other words, it describes a subject matter only to the limits of arousing the reader's curiosity.

On his part, Genette believes that the temptation function depends on the reader's own interpretation and understanding of the author's message. He maintains that "the temptation function is always present but may prove to be positive, negative, or nil depending on the receiver, who does not always conform to the sender's own idea of his addressee." A title, according to Genette, should not promise the reader more than the text can offer because he will end up by being disappointed.

2.2.4.3. Intertitles:

They appear inside the book and they are understood only by the readers who are in the process of reading the whole text. Genette defines an intertitle as: "the title of a section of a book: in unitary texts, these sections may be parts, chapters, or paragraphs in collections, they may be constituent poems, novellas, or essays" (295).

-Absence:

Some unitary texts such as medieval epics and some modern novels do not contain intertitles while plays, in general, contain indications of time and place that may serve as intertitles. However, intertitles are absent in works such as epistolary novels, travel writing and journals (296).

-Degrees of Presence:

Genette analysed the degrees of presence of intertitles by dividing writing into four generic categories: fictional narratives, referential (historical) narratives, collections of poems and theoretical texts. Since our study is carried out on narrative fiction, we disregard the three other categories.

***Narrative Fiction:**

The presence of intertitles in contemporary fiction can be classified into degrees:

- 1- Mute Divisions between the Parts of the Text
- 2- Astrics
- 3- Numbers
- 4- Numbered Parts and Chapters
- 5- Thematic Intertitles
- 6- Indications of Place and Time:

They are borrowed from drama.

- 7- Rhematic titles:

When there is second- degree work which is referred to by its generic category.

- 8- Mixed Titles:

When they appear inside the work to refer to a second-degree work with a different generic nature and are simultaneously related in theme to the subject matter of the diegesis.

2.2.5. The Epigraph:

2.2.5.1. Definition:

An epigraph is generally a quote from another work that is used by the writer before his work. It is defined by Genette as “a quotation placed en exergue [in the exergue], generally at the head of a work or a section of a work” (144). It usually appears before the preface on the right hand of the first page and after the dedication. In some cases, the epigraph is left to the end of the work which makes it a terminal epigraph. Its significance becomes stronger as the writer leaves the last words in his work to someone else by using his quote.

When an epigraph is used before a chapter or a section, it is generally placed directly before it. Genette believes that an epigraph can be a quoted text, which is the most common form, or a drawing such the case of “the three bars from *The Rite of Spring* reproduced at the head of the novel *La Consagracion de la primavera* by Alejo Carpentier” or a musical score like “the words and music of the fishermen's hymn "Hear us, O Lord" that justifies the title of a collection of stories and novellas by Lowry”(150). The presence of an epigraph in a work call attention to its relationship to three persons: the original author of the quote, the author who uses it as an epigraph and the reader who receives the message and decodes the relationship between the epigraph and the text after it. Genette proposes a terminology to be used to refer to these three persons.

2.2.5.2. The Epigraphed:

The epigraphed is the writer whose words are used as a quote to serve as an epigraph before another author's work, section or chapter. In relation to the epigraphed, Genette divided epigraphs into two types:

-Allographic Epigraphs:

They are attributed to another author who is not the author of the work. Usually, the epigraph appears between quotation marks with solely the name of its original author below, without giving an exact reference. In some cases such as a biography or a critical study of one author, the writer uses his words as an epigraph without writing the name because the attribution of the quote to the writer being studied is obvious.

-Autographic epigraphs:

They are quotes invented by the writer himself to be used as epigraphs before his work. They can be divided into two categories:

***Apocryphal Epigraph:**

It designates an epigraph that is written by the author of the work and attributed to an imaginary writer or a character in another work by the author himself. Genette gives the example of the epigraph of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* attributed to a character named Thomas Parke d'Invilliers in *Far Side of Paradise* (152).

***Anonymous Epigraph:**

It is used without any attribution to its writer. In this case the reader finds difficulty in decoding the epigraph's message and identifying its relationship to the author's text. Genette gives two examples: The epigraph of *The Maximes* which is attributed to La Rochefoucauld and the epigraph of *L'Esprit des lois* which source is Ovid.

2.2.5.3. The Epigrapher:

The epigrapher is obviously the writer of the book where the epigraph appears. Genette draws attention to the fact that some epigraphs seem to be properly attributed to the narrator in fiction rather than the author. He gives the example of the epigraph used in *Doctor Faustus* which contains nine lines from Dante and suggests that it can be attributed to the

narrator Serenus Zeitblom instead of the author Thomas Mann. He also acknowledges the fact that the epigraph which is attributed to the narrator is by extension a property of the author of the work (154).

2.2.5.4. The Epigraphee:

The epigraphee is the reader of the work that is preceded by an epigraph. If the epigraph is attributed to the narrator, there are two cases. First, it is used in an extradiegetic narration, so the reader is also supposed to be extradiegetic and he becomes the epigrahee because he is the final receiver of the work. Second, if the epigraph appears in an intradiegetic narration, the epigrahee becomes intradiegetic because both the writer and the receiver are imaginary. In this case, the reader identifies with the imaginary reader of the second-degree work while reading the epigraph of the intradiegetic narration. "In short, the addressee of the epigraph is always the addressee of the work, who is not always its actual receiver" (156).

2.2.5.5. Functions of the Epigraph:

The use of an epigraph on the head of a work is a coded message that demands the reader's efforts to understand the writer's aim behind such choice in particular because quoting someone else's words to invite the reader to read the work means that they have a close relationship to the work of the author or at least to his narrator. Genette proposes four functions for the epigraph stating that two are direct and two of them are more "oblique" (156).

- Direct Functions:

*** Commenting on the Title:**

Here the epigraph is used not to comment on the text but to justify the choice of the title either by explaining its meaning or showing its figurative side. Genette gives the example of the book *Sodome et Gomorr* showing that the epigraph "Woman will have Gomorrah and man will have Sodom" taken from Vigny explains that the title is not used to refer to a

historical volume but it is meant to be figurative by evoking homosexuality (156). Genette believes that "this use of the epigraph as a justificatory appendage of the title is almost a must when the title itself consists of a borrowing, an allusion, or a parodic distortion" (157). He also mentions a reverse function when the title modifies the epigraph but he considers it very rare.

***Commenting on the Text:**

The second function lies in commenting on the text in an indirect way that needs the reader's efforts to understand the significance of the epigraph to the text. However, such relation is generally understood when the act of reading is successfully done. In Genette's words, "The attribution of relevance in such cases depends on the reader, whose hermeneutic capacity is often put to the test - as it has been from the very beginnings of the novelistic epigraph, with Scott, Nodier, Hugo, and Stendhal, who seem to have cultivated the appeal of epigraphs that are definitively puzzling or, as Hugo said, 'strange and mysterious'" (158). Some epigraphs of this category are called by Genette "romantic" because they have a more affective influence on the reader. Stendhal describes this type by writing "The epigraph must heighten the reader's feeling, his emotion, if emotion there be, and not present a more or less philosophical opinion about the situation" (Genette 129).

-Oblique Functions:

***Backing the Work:**

This function is called so because the importance of the epigraph in some cases does not lie in its content or its relation to the text but simply in the importance of the author being quoted. Genette maintains that "[...] in an epigraph, very often the main thing is not what it says but who its author is, plus the sense of indirect backing that its presence at the edge of a text gives rise to - a backing that, in general, is less costly than the backing of a preface and even of a dedication, for one can obtain it without seeking permission" (195). Indeed, many

writers took their epigraphs from canonical works to gain attention and importance by referring to them. For example, one of the writers who were widely quoted in epigraphs is Shakespeare.

***The Epigraph-Effect:**

Another oblique function of the epigraph is the effect of its mere presence on the head of a work because Genette reads it as a sign that informs the reader about the new work or at least situates it in a literary tradition. He states that "The presence or absence of an epigraph in itself marks (with a very thin margin of error) the period, the genre, or the tenor of a piece of writing"(160). It is used by many new writers to situate themselves in a specific context in the canon.

2.2.6. Notes:

2.2.6.1. Definition:

A note is a statement appended to the text to explain or comment on one element in the text. Genette defines it as " a statement of variable length (one word is enough) connected to a more or less definite segment of text and either placed opposite or keyed to this segment"(319). Using notes consists of inserting an indicator such as a symbol, a number or even a sentence like "see..." close to the item that will be explained or commented on in the notes and then repeating the same indicator before the note added. The latter can refer to different elements starting from a word to a chapter, a whole work or theory or period. According to their temporal positions, notes can be divided into original, later and delayed.

-Sender and Addressee:

Genette uses these two terms to refer to the one who writes the note to whom. He proposes a set of relationships that exist between the writer of the note and the writer of the

text. The following list is a summary of the relationships Genette mentioned with his own examples.

a-Authorial note to an authorial text (the most common case).

b-Authorial note to a narratorial text (Tom Jones).

c-Authorial note to a an actorial text or speech (Stendhal).

d-Pseudo-editorial note to an actorial text (*La Nouvelle Heloise*).

e-In critical editions, An editorial note to: -An authorial text

-A narratorial text

-An actorial text

f-An actorial note to a narratorial text (*Finnegans Wake*).

Genette also drives attention to the existence of situation of coexistence of senders:

1-Author + editor (critical editions).

2-Fictive author + real author (Scott).

3-Author + actor (Tristram Shandy).

4-Multiple actors (*Finnegans Wake*).

He also mentions another type of notes that he called “notes with embedded enunciating” to refer to those notes that include a quote such as “third party cited by author” or “author cited by third party”(323).

The addressee of the note is supposed to be the reader of the text in case he is interested because the information provided is reduced to a note which is not of primary importance to all readers. On the other hand, the note of second-degree work is sent to the reader of the quoted text, being real or fictional.

2.2.6.2. Functions:

-Discursive Texts:

***Original Notes:**

They include definitions and explanations of terms used in the text in addition to references for quotes and to authorities and supplementary documents. They also include "digressions on the subject or sometimes off it"(326). Genette believes that the original note is not part of the paratext because "the original authorial note, at least when connected to the text that is itself discursive and with which it has a relation of continuity and formal homogeneity, belongs to the text, which the note extends, ramifies, and modulates rather than comments on"(328).

***Later Notes:**

Later notes are considered in relation to the preface. Since the later preface comments on the text, the later notes extend the preface by commenting on the text and thus becoming part of the paratext.

***Delayed Notes:**

They are usually produced with reference to the author's achievements and Genette believes that they are used for "providing long-range autocriticism and putting the author's achievement into perspective"(329).

- Texts of Fiction:

They are notes used with novels and poems which have historical or philosophical aspects. They are not connected to the narrative but to the nonfictional aspects of those works. In Genette's words, "texts whose fictionality is very "impure," very conspicuous for its historical references or sometimes for its philosophical reflections: novels or poems whose notes for the most part bear precisely on the nonfictional aspect of the narrative"(332).

***Allographic Notes:**

They are added by the publisher, generally posthumously, and can be considered external to the work and without the author's consensus. In such case, Genette considers them out of the paratext.

***Actorial Notes:**

They are notes included in the work but produced by the character and not the author. However, the latter accepts his character as an authority and includes them in the work. They only give the character an authorial dimension.

***Fictional Notes:**

They are notes produced by apocryphal or fictive author. They are often used in epistolary novels or journals because the author becomes only the receiver of the work like an editor and the sender of the note is the fictive author. They give the writer a possibility of attributing something to another author he creates.

Genette believes that notes are a key and elusive element in the study of the paratext because, they stand sometimes with the text, other times with the paratext and in some cases they stand between both without belonging to any of them. However, the primary intention behind their study lies in determining their functions as paratextual elements.

2.2.7. The Illustration:

Genette did not theorise about the illustration's relationship to the text; he analysed in details the verbal paratext only. However, in 2003, Emily E. Marsh and Marilyn Domas white proposed a taxonomy of relationships between images and texts in an article entitled "A Taxonomy of Relationships between Images and Text". The aim of their study is to propose a taxonomy that can be applied to all types of documents. In fact, it came as a synthesis of all the relationships suggested by other researchers in previous studies.

Although the theory is not developed to be applied on fiction in specific, its broader aims included serving writers in general. The two researchers believe that “many applications can be developed quickly and with little effort using this conceptual system [...] This image taxonomy offers new ways to understand and combine images with text both for writers and illustrators”(Marsh and White 661).

The taxonomy consists of 49 image functions grouped according to the relationship of these images to texts. They are divided into three categories depending on the image closeness to the text. First, functions that have little relationship to the text. Second, others that are closer and third, those that are based on the text but transcend it. “Useful for all subject areas and document types, the taxonomy develops a common, standardised language for expressing relationships between images and text”(662). Consequently, such language can be used in a literary context to understand the relation of the cover’s illustration to the text away from subjective interpretations. The taxonomy is presented in the following table

2.2.7.1. Table I. Taxonomy of Functions of Images to the Text

A Functions expressing little relation to the text	B Functions expressing close relation to the text	C Functions that go beyond the text
A1 Decorate	B1 Reiterate	C1 Interpret
A1.1 Change pace	B1.1 Concretize	C1.1 Emphasize
A1.2 Match style	B1.1.1 Sample	C1.2 Document
A2 Elicit emotion	B1.1.1.1 Author/Source	C2 Develop
A2.1 Alienate	B1.2 Humanize	C2.1 Compare

A2.2 Express poetically	B1.3 Common referent	C2.2 Contrast
A3 Control	B1.4 Describe	C3 Transform
A3.1 Engage	B1.5 Graph	C3.1 Alternate progress
A3.2 Motivate	B1.6 Exemplify	C3.2 Model
	B1.7 Translate	C3.2.1 Model cognitive process
	B2 Organize	C3.2.2 Model physical process
	B2.1 Isolate	
	B2.2 Contain	
	B2.3 Locate	C3.3 Inspire
	B2.4 Induce perspective	
	B3 Relate	
	B3.1 Compare	
	B3.2 Contrast	
	B3.3 Parallel	
	B4 Condense	
	B4.1 Concentrate	
	B4.2 Compact	
	B5 Explain	
	B5.1 Define	
	B5.2 Complement	

Marsh. Emily. E and Marilyn Domas White. "A Taxonomy of Relationships between Images and Text". *Journal of Documentation* 59 . 6 (2003).647- 672.Web.

The functions included in the table above are explained by the writers in appendix I which we include at the end of the chapter. In the original appendix, the writers included numbers indicating the sources of the functions from previous studies but we deleted these numbers since our reference will be the article itself. The method we use to identify the functions of the illustration is qualitative analysis which is used by Marsh and White to develop the taxonomy and apply it on several examples in their research. They adopt the method proposed by Miller and Crabtree who describe qualitative research as “an essentially inductive process in which the analyst approaches the data, reaches an understanding of its essential parts, and formulates a conception of its meaning in terms of larger context” (Marsh and White 651).

Putting the definition into practical analytical steps that can be applied to deduce image-text relations, the two researchers propose two stages of analysis:

-Stage One:

It is basically a process of understanding the text; “the researcher reads the text closely, looks for and recognizes meaningful segments of the text to create a summary that ‘reveals the interpretative truth in the text’ then categorizes the text segments and determines the patterns and themes that connect them” (651).

-Stage Two:

In this stage the taxonomy of functions is used as a reference in which all the possible image-text pairs were coded into three columns depending on their relations. For practical reasons, we intend to present only the results of our analysis of the image-text relations, in our case, the illustration-narrative, using the coded functions in the taxonomy (see Table I). It is

worthy to mention that an image-text pair may have several illustration functions coded in the taxonomy for these functions are not exclusive.

2.3. Intertextuality:

Before introducing Gerard Genette's theory of intertextuality, we believe that a historical overview of the concept is crucial to our understanding of its development and redefinition in literary criticism since it has been assimilated by different schools of thought in various critical arenas.

2.3.1. A Historical Overview:

The term "intertextuality" was first coined by Julia Kristeva in reference to Michael Bakhtin's ideas, which were not introduced to Europe until the late 1960's. The latter used the term to refer to Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic nature of human language. In "Word, dialogue and novel" she introduces *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. In fact, the concept of intertextuality was originally linked to the double-voiced nature of discourse in the novel as Bakhtin writes:

the word is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogic interaction. It never gravitates toward a single consciousness or a single voice. The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of those concrete contexts into which it has entered. (105)

When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and

evaluations of others, uninhabited by others' voices. No, he receives the word from another's voice and filled with that other voice. The word enters his context from another context, permeated with the interpretations of others. His own thought finds the word already inhabited. (106)

Bakhtine considered the novel to be the dialogic work compared to the monologic poems such as the epic. In addition, he explains what he meant by dialogism in the novel by writing "The dialogic includes...the quoted speech of the characters... the relationship between the characters' discourses and the author's discourse...and between all these discourses and other discourses outside the text, which are imitated, evoked or alluded to" (Cited in Baldrige 15). By mentioning the other discourses outside the text that are evoked, imitated or alluded to, Bakhtine seems to refer to intertextuality, without using the term, as part of his ideas about dialogism.

Indeed, the concept of intertextuality was introduced in a critical moment of a rise of poststructuralist theories by a number of thinkers who belonged to *Tel Quel* group. Consequently, It acquired paramount importance among such French critics who became later known as poststructuralist theorists attacking the influence that De Saussure linguistics had on the interpretation of literature. The period witnessed a growth of two critical counterparts: structuralism and poststructuralism in addition to political changes of the 1968 that enhanced theoretical questioning of traditional concepts. Graham Allen contends that:

An attention to the role of literature and literary language was crucial to the rise of poststructuralist theory, nowhere more so than in the journal *Tel Quel*. Most of the major theorists associated with the emergence of poststructuralism in France, including Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Philippe Sollers and

Michel Foucault, contributed to *Tel Quel's* investigation of literature's radical relation to political and philosophical thought. If the theory of the text and of textuality can be said to be at the centre of these writers' work, then *Tel Quel* can be said to give that often divergent set of theories a common site. (*Intertextuality* 31)

Kristiva's analysis of Bakhtinian dialogism is much influenced and oriented by Derrida's ideas of the intersection of texts and Lacanian psychoanalysis, for example, her definitions of intertextuality seem to be inspired by an assimilation of different theories as she writes in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel",

any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double... Dialogue and ambivalence lead me to conclude that, within the interior space of the text as well as within the space of texts, poetic language is a "double"... The writer's interlocutor [...] is the writer himself, but as reader of another text. The one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since his interlocutor is a text, he himself is no more than a text rereading itself. The dialogical structure, therefore, appears only in the light of the text elaborating itself as ambivalent in relation to another text.(66-87)

Intertextuality as a literary phenomenon has existed long before its theorising in literary criticism, but the introduction of the term led many critics to redefine and analyse the existence of texts within other texts in different forms that can be explicit such as quotations or forms that demands the reader's construction and interpretation of the textual relationships

depending on his hermeneutic capacities. Roland Barthes is one of the critics who analysed intertextuality before its acquiring of the terminology and introduction by Kristiva when he wrote in *Writing Degree Zero*:

[I]t is impossible to develop within duration without gradually becoming a prisoner of someone else's words and even of my own. A stubborn after-image, which comes from all the previous modes of writing and even from the past of my own, drowns the sound of my present words. Any written trace precipitates, as inside a chemical at first transparent, innocent and neutral, mere duration gradually reveals in suspension a whole past of increasing density, like a cryptogram. (23)

Barthes believes that the apparently innocent and transparent text holds parts from other texts, a phenomenon that he referred to with the term "cryptography" which is translated as "cryptogram". Moreover, Barthes gives an analysis of intertextual relations in Balzac's *Sarrazine*, illustrating borrowed quotes, images and cultural traits in his famous work *S/Z*. Later, Barth developed his theory on intertextuality in the novel and related it to the reader rather than the author, who is assumed to be dead. In *Image – Music – Text*, he writes:

a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused, and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. ... the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. (148)

Besides Roland Barthes who linked his theory of intertextuality to the reader who signals the construction of meaning, in the same vein, Riffaterre believes that the "term refers to an operation of the reader's mind"(142).

The theory of Riffaterre can be considered closer to Gerard Genette's structuralism than Barthes's deconstructive approach. The influence of semiotics is clearly seen in his theory of intertextuality. Indeed, he refuses the mimetic nature of the literary words holding that they refer to an intertext rather than the outside world while retaining meaning by their semantic relationships. In *Interpretation and Undecidability*, he contends that the reader must avoid what he terms as "referential fallacy" because in his words "the text refers not to objects outside of itself, but to an inter-text. The words of the text signify not by referring to things, but by presupposing other texts" (228), consequently, any reader of literature must "surmount the mimesis hurdle". (cited in Allen 115)

In addition, Riffaterre investigated the reading process and his contribution led to the introduction of different critical terms associated with the phenomenon of intertextuality but contextualised in the field of hermeneutics. He used the term intertextuality to refer, in his words, to "the web of functions that constitutes and regulates the relationship between text and intertext" (cited in Allen 120). On the other hand, he introduced the term inter-text to refer to "a corpus of texts, textual fragments, or text-like segments of the sociolect that shares a lexicon and, to a lesser extent, a syntax with the text we are reading (directly or indirectly) in the form of synonyms, or even conversely, in the form of antonyms. In addition, each member of this corpus is a structural homologue of the text" (Riffaterre 142). His theory of intertextuality does not emphasize the recognition and decoding of the inter-texts that exist within the work under analysis for he holds that most important is presumption that these inter-texts exist and their mere existence give knowledge of the sociolect being transformed

by the text while the latter posses clues that enable the reader to decode it without reference to the outside world. In this context, Graham Allen argues in *Intertextuality* that:

Riffaterre's interpretive practice is dependent on discovering the ways in which texts produce semiotic unity by transforming socially shared codes, clichés, oppositions and descriptive systems; yet such an approach refuses to accept that such a reliance on the sociolect involves the text in anything other than its own self-generating system, its idiolectic and thus unique significance. (124)

On the other hand, Genette's theorising of intertextuality is part of his development of structuralist poetics in three major works that investigated the relationships between texts on a larger scale. We previously mentioned his three works and his introduction of five categories of textual relationships including intertextuality. While textual relationships are termed in Genette's theory transtextuality, intertextuality becomes reduced, in his view, to the concrete presence of one text in another.

2.3.2. Definition:

Genette's intertextuality is defined in matters of textual co-presence. Regardless of its form, the mere presence of one text within another, being explicit or implicit is an intertextual relationship. He writes in *Palimpsests* that it is "a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts" (1-2).

2.3.3. Forms of Intertextuality:

Such presence can be seen in a literary work in three major forms:

2.3.3.1. Plagiarism:

The presence of a text in another one without permission or reference.

2.3.3.2. Quotation:

It is the use of another text in the author's text without modifications using quotation marks with or without reference to the original author.

2.3.3.3. Allusion:

A more literary and complicated form of intertextuality, allusion is regarded by Genette as "an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would rather remain unintelligible" (*Palimpsests* 2).

The aforementioned categories are Genette's typology of relationships or relations of textual copresence.

2.4. Intratextuality:

It is an internal form of intertextuality if the author's work is considered as a continuity of production. Intratextuality in Genette's terms is the relations of copresence that link the same author's texts. It is a common literary phenomenon because a writer cannot get detached from himself while writing a new work, thus auto influence may appear in a references to places, characters, titles, images and even whole passages from his previous works. Generally, intratextuality is intentional and used by the writer for specific purposes that might be ideological or aesthetic.

2.5. Metatextuality:

It is a relation between two texts that Genette calls "commentary" (*Palimpsests* 4) as one text comments on the other without quoting it or even mentioning it. He believes that such relationship is "critical par excellence" (4). Despite the importance of this textual relationship that unites a text with its criticism, it remained less developed and it lacks the practical tools of analysis compared to other concepts notably, paratextuality.

2.6. Hypertextuality:

Genette defines hypertextuality as “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary”(5). Genette uses the term hypotext to refer to what other critics call intertext, a preceding text without which the hypertext would never exist. He uses hypertext to refer to the new text that has undergone what he terms “transformation”(5). According to Genette, a hypotext may have several hypertexts that can be differentiated depending on the process of transformation they went through. He gives the example of Homer's *The Odyssey* as a hypotext to James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virgil's *The Aeneid*.

Moreover, the process of transformation can be simple and direct or complex and indirect such as imitation. It might take several forms including a simple evocation, a derivation, an inspiration or an imitation. In Genette's theory, hypertextuality is self-conscious and deliberate rewriting of particular texts; it includes parody and travesty. More important to Genette's investigation of hypotextual transformations are the processes that result in hypertextual transpositions.

2.6.1. Hypertextual Transformations:

- Self- expurgation:

It includes the changes that a writer makes in his own text for outside reasons such as public consideration or financial demands. Thus, the newly published text becomes different from the original one.

-Continuation:

Genette explained continuation as an author's attempt to finish a work that is left unfinished by its original author because of death or abandonment. In Genette' words, “the

practice of continuation has often been resorted to in order to complete an interrupted text, whether literary or musical, by giving it an ending that conforms as closely as possible to the author's attested intentions" (*Palimpsests* 162).

***Cyclical Continuation:**

Some writers choose to complete a work by writing one that contains the causes of the events or one that it ends to detail their consequences. Genette gives the example of the poems written to link the two epics *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*.

***Unfaithful Continuation:**

It is a continuation that does not respect the intentions of the original author or his style either by misunderstanding the work or deliberately correcting it.

***Murderous Continuation:**

In some cases the continuation contributes to the erasing of the hypotext because they thematically, stylistically and linguistically far from it.

-Sequel:

It is an additional text to a work that has been completed by its original author. Genette compares the continuation to the sequel writing that "the sequel performs an entirely different function, which in general consists in exploiting the success of a work that in its own time was often considered complete, and in setting it into motion again with new episodes (162). However, a sequel is not always faithful to its hypotext, it might aim at correcting it or refuting it. Genette believes that "one can just as easily reverse the significance of a text by giving it a sequel that refutes it as by modifying its setting, its tone or its plot"(198).

- Generic Reactivation:

Sometimes an author may decide to revive a genre that has been forgotten for centuries; however, his work will not strictly respect the conventions of the old genre because he will make certain transformations or additions.

2.6.2. Transpositions:

A transformation is considered by Genette as “the most important of all hypertextual practices, if only because of the historical importance and the aesthetic accomplishment of some of the works that fall under its heading. Its claim also comes from the scope and variety of the procedures it calls upon.” (212). He goes further to state that the variety of “the transformational procedures” used in this process gives birth to long works “whose textual amplitude and aesthetic and/or ideological ambition may mask or even completely obfuscate their hypertextual character” (213). He organises transformational operations into subdivisions that are far from being exclusive because some of them may be used to produce the same hypertext.

- Translation:

It is the most obvious form for the text is transposed from one language into another.

- Versification and Prosification:

They are two processes that turn a text either from prose into verse or vice versa.

- Transmetrification, Transstylization and Transvocalisation:

The first process is the transformation of a poem from one meter into another while the second is the rewriting of a work in a style different from the original. Transvocalisation is the change in the narrative voice from the third to the first or vice versa.

-Reduction:

They are the processes by which a text can be extended or abridged. They include:

*** Excision and self-excision:**

Some texts are modified by the publishers by deleting some parts that can cause public disavowal or authority's censorship. Graham Allen explains this process by writing: "Excision and reduction might make us think of what in Britain are known as bowdlerized versions of texts, versions of Shakespeare or popular novels which Victorian publishers often published minus the 'sexy' or religious controversial bits" (109). Genette terms the process of deleting some inappropriate passages as expurgation while Allen goes further to add film adaptations to this category noting that Genette did not mention it though it conforms to the principal of transformation existent in this type of hypertextual transposition. He contends that:

the phenomenon of film adaptations of literary classics clearly constitutes another version of such a hypertextual activity...Film versions of the bulky novels of the Victorian period such as those by Dickens or George Eliot, can clearly only represent small sections of the actual text they hypertextually transpose. Most film adaptations do not, of course, include the all-pervading voice of third-person narrators which characterize novels by authors such as Jane Austen or Henry James. (109)

Consequently, condensing the text for cinematic purposes or deleting some of its parts for publication ones are considered part of this process. However, when the transformation is done by the author himself especially for theatrical performance, it becomes self-excision.

***Concision and self-concision:**

While excision is the simple deletion of parts of the original work, concision lies in abridging the work without deletions and operating on the level of sentences not the text as a whole. Genette made the distinction by stating:

A distinction must be made between excision, which can at pinch dispense with any textual production and proceed by simple erasures or scissor cuts, and concision, whereby a text is abridged without the suppression of any of its significant thematic parts, but is rewritten in a more concise style, thus producing a new text which might, at a pinch, preserve not one word of the original text. (Genette 235)

When the hypotext undergoes what Genette considers as “a stylistic elaboration”(237) by the its author it is termed self-concision. Excision and concision share, in Genette's view, the characteristic of transforming the hypotext directly “to subject it to a process of reduction, of which it remains the frame and the constant support”(237).

*** Condensation:**

As a text transformation, it depends on the writer's memory of the hypertext while reducing it to shorter text that can be either a descriptive summary or a digest.

- Augmentation:

*** Extension:**

Some works are chosen by writers to be extended, a practice that is common in drama.

*** Expansion:**

According to Genette, expansion is “the antithesis of concision, [it] proceeds not through massive additions but through a kind of stylistic dilation”(260).

***Amplification:**

It is a much wider practice by which a hypotext is transformed into a larger, generally different generic hypertext that results from thematic and stylistic transformations. Genette gives the example of classical tragedy. He believes that “Amplification is one of the basic resources of classical drama, especially of tragedy, from *Aeschylus* down to (at least) the late

eighteenth century. Tragedy as we know it emerged from the theatrical amplification of a few mythic and/ or epic episodes" (262).

- Transmodalisation:

Transmodalization is the transformations that affect the mode of the text.

***Intermodal Transmodalisation:**

A change from a mood into another such as:

Dramatization:

It lies in a shift from narrative mode to dramatic one which is according to Genette a frequent practice in literary history "with the mystery plays (based on the Bible) and Miracle plays (based on the lives of the Saints), Elizabethan theater"(278). He goes further to mention dramatic, especially cinematic, adaptations of novels under this category.

Narrativization:

It is a rare literary practice that can be found, according to Genette in Laforgue's "Hamlet"(282) when the play by Shakespeare has been transformed into a short story with the same title.

***Intramodal Transmodalisation:**

It includes all the transformations within the same mood such as the distribution of discourse among characters and the abundance of dramatic commentary in drama.

2.6.2.1. Thematic Transpositions:

-Diegetic Transposition:

Genette uses the term diegesis to refer to what Current Usage defines as "the spatiotemporal world designated by the narrative" (295). He made a distinction between diegesis and the story or sequence of events told by the narrative or the play.

-Homodiegetic Transformations:

They are transformations of hypotexts that are characterised by diegetic faithfulness. Genette specifies that “[an] almost infallible sign of diegetic faithfulness is the preservation of the characters’ names, which is a sign of their identity –i.e., of their inscription within a diegetic world: a nationality, a gender, a family background, etc.

-Heterodiegetic Transformations:

They are characterised by a change in the identity of the characters and the setting of the action. Genette’s examples include James Joyce’s Leopold Bloom who is Ulysses in modern world.

Other diegetic variables include:

***Age:** the character’s age is changed when the transformation is either “analeptic” continuation or “proleptic” one.

***Sex:** According to Genette, the change of the sex of the character is an important part of the transformation because “the most interesting forms of the transsexualisation are [...] those in which a change of sex suffices to upset and sometimes cast ridicule upon the whole thematic intent of the hypotext” (298).

*** Proximation:**

It includes a change of space or time or both of them to fit the audience. It is a “habitual movement of diegetic transposition” because “the hypertext transposes the diegesis of its hypotext to bring it up to date and closer to its own audience in temporal, geographic, or social terms” (304). Proximation may include a spatial change that is termed “naturalisation” or a temporal one which is usually a “modernisation” of the hypotext.

-Pragmatic Transformation:

It is an intentional change in the events of the story. Genette draws attention to the fact that pragmatic transformation usually accompanies diegetic transposition because a modernisation of a story requires a change in its action.

-Transmotivation:

Considered as an important element of semantic transformation, the replacement of an action's motive by another is called transmotivation. Concerning motivation, there are three cases:

***Motivation:**

Being a positive aspect, Motivation lies in the addition of a motive in the hypertext while it does not exist in the hypotext.

***Demotivation:**

Being a negative aspect, it consists of deleting a motive that originally exists in the hypotext without replacing it with another one.

***Transmotivation:**

It lies in deleting an original motive and adding a new one in the hypertext. Genette summarises the process in an equation:

Demotivation + remotivation = transmotivation

-Axiological Transformation:

Genette defines it as "any operation of axiological nature bearing on the value that is implicitly or explicitly assigned to an action or group of actions: namely, the sequence of actions, attitudes, and feelings that constitutes a 'character'"(343). Axiological transformation includes three types:

***Primary Revaluation:**

It is related to the central character or primary figure in the hypotext and Genette explains it by maintaining: "revaluation consists not in increasing the importance of the hero but in improving his axiological status through a nobler behaviour, nobler motives, or nobler symbolic connotations"(344).

***Secondary Revaluation:**

It is related to a secondary figure in the hypotext. Genette links it to "any promotion of a secondary character"(344).

***Devaluation:**

It is a process of writing that devaluates the character in the hypotext, his motives, actions or symbolic status. Genette refers to it as a "demystification" while the devaluation of devaluation is considered "an aggravation".

-Transvaluation:

It is, according to Genette, a double process of devaluation and (counter) valuation. It affects the same characters by changing the system of values to which they belong and consequently affecting the nature of the hypertext including narration (from monodiegetic to heterodiegetic narrative) and sometimes generic category (from epic to novel).

-Thematic Transformation:

It is the reversing of the ideology of the literary work.

2.7. Architextuality:

It is the most abstract category as it concerns the work's generic category which may be indicated in the paratext or may be challenged by it. Genette claims that it is the reader's or the critic's task to determine a work's generic category while the latter "is known to guide

and determine to a considerable degree the readers' expectations, and thus their reception of the work" (*Palimpsests* 5).

2.8. Conclusion:

Gerard Genette is one of the contemporary theoreticians who contributed to a systemisation of narrative poetics. His contribution is not limited to the introduction of new literary terms that make texts' analysis more practical; however, it widened the study of narrative poetics and introduced his theory of transtextuality or textual transcendence.

Chapter Three:

Analysis of the Paratextual Relations in *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Penelopiad*

Chapter Three: Analysis of the Paratextual Relations in *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's*

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3.5. Conclusion

3.1. Introduction

In our analysis of the paratextual relations in Margaret Atwood's novels, we focus on the front cover of the three novels as it is the most informative and the richest part of the whole cover. In general, it contains the name of the author, the title of the work, the illustration and the emblem of the publisher. Besides the analysis of the general title, we study the relationship of the text to the epigraphs, the intertitles and the notes for their significance in understanding the aesthetic and political aspects of the novels. Since Atwood's novels are generally published in different countries simultaneously, we choose to analyse the first Canadian edition of her books.

3.2. *Lady Oracle*:

3.2.1. The Front Cover:

The front cover of *Lady Oracle* is black in colour containing the name of the author Margaret Atwood on the top of the page written in big white font. In the bottom, the title lady Oracle appears in yellow bigger font written in the form of an inward angle above which is the illustration of the cover and beneath it is the genre indication: a novel.

3.2.1.1. The Title:

Lady Oracle is the title of Margaret Atwood's third novel and originally the title of a volume of poetry published by the novel's female protagonist Joan Foster. Before writing

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such volume that made her a celebrity, she was publishing gothic romances under the penname Louisa. K. Delacourt without the knowledge of her Marxist husband.

Writing gothics was a difficult process that demanded Joan thinking and sometimes doing research or acting the scenes of the stories she is writing in order to get inspiration. More frequently, she used to identify herself with her characters. On the contrary, writing the volume of poetry is a new experience; it resembles a scene in a gothic novel, a ritual, a passage into another world or a communication with a supernatural power that she identifies as a woman.

In fact, Joan started writing poetry when she was trying automatic writing while performing a scene in a gothic novel she was working on. She used a candle in front of a three sided dressing-table mirror and a pen. She was in a state of unconsciousness, seeing herself entering the mirror, crossing into another world and walking in a corridor. At the end, Joan found that she wrote the word “bow”.

In the experiment of automatic writing, Joan felt the presence of a woman standing in the mirror behind her. For three months, she was repeating the experiment and words came to her from a woman who seemed angry and powerful. *Lady Oracle* as a title of both the whole novel and the poem causes ambiguity which exists according to Genette due to the “presence in the work of a second-degree work from which it takes its title, so that one cannot say whether the title refers thematically to the deigesis or, in a purely designative way, to the second-degree work”(84). Consequently, to solve the problem of ambiguity, we analyse the relation of the title to both the poem and the novel.

-“Lady Oracle”: The Title of the Volume of Poetry:

As a title “Lady Oracle” designates the volume of poetry published by Joan Foster, the novel’s protagonist. It was chosen by the publisher not the author; however, it plays a second function which is describing the poem. It is a **thematic title** that has close relation to the subject of the poem and to the process of writing itself. An oracle is a woman who foretells the future and possesses metaphysical powers and the poem was written in an experiment that resembles exorcism.

Joan believes that the words of the poem were dictated by a woman from another world. She characterises her as “enormously powerful [...] but it was an unhappy power” (222). In Coral Ann Howells words “the most significant thing about an oracle is that it is a voice which comes out of a woman’s body and is associated with hidden dangerous knowledge, but that it is not her own voice”(67). While readers of the poem make biographical interpretations and presume that it was about Joan’s marriage, it was rather about the lady whose power threatens and frightens Joan. Included in the novel, the following passage from the poem describes her:

Who is the one standing in the prow

Who is the one voyaging

under the sky’s arch, under the earth’s arch

under the arch of arrows

in the death boat, why does she sing

She kneels, she is bent down

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Under the power

Her tears are dark

Her tears are jagged

Her tears are the death you fear

Under the water, under the water sky

Her tears fall, they are dark flowers (Lady Oracle)

The title of the poem can be considered as **a literal thematic one** because it has close relation to the poems subject as the publisher Doug Sturgess reads the poem and describes it as “a mixture of Khalil Gibran and Rod McKuen” (225) then, takes its title from Section Five of the poem which is included in the novel.

She sits on the iron throne

She is one and three

The dark lady – the redgold lady

The blank lady – oracle

Of blood, she who must be

Obeyed forever

Her glass wings are gone

She floats down the river

Singing her last song (226)

The major character in the poem is lady oracle whose name is used as its title. Moreover, the publisher has chosen the title to guarantee a huge propaganda for the book. He has even made a link between Joan's poetry and women's liberation movement while its mystic side will attract the public: "Lady Oracle, that's it, I have a nose for them. The women's movement, the occult, all of that"(226). Indeed, the publisher's anticipations proved to be adequate. The poem became a success and its title turned to be a subject of controversy which leads us to comment on its third function: temptation.

According to Genette, the function of temptation can be positive or negative. However, in the case of "Lady Oracle", it starts positive and turns to be negative. After publishing her poem, Joan became a famous poet and the media was excited about both the title and the poems. The Toronto Star's review describes the book as "Unknown Bursts on Literary Scene like Comet" (234) while the globe describes it as "gnomic" and "chthonic"(234). However, the title's influence changes to be negative when Joan fails to adapt to her new status and reveals to a journalist in the talk show *Afternoon Hot Spot* the experiment that helped her write "Lady Oracle".

At that point, people started identifying her with her work and referring to her by its title: "'Are you Lady Oracle?' he said, 'It's the name of my book' I said" (238). At this stage, the title's function of tempting went beyond the publisher's anticipation. The title opened another dimension because the public started concentrating on its semantic aspect rather than

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considering it as a literary expression used to designate a literary work and above all, they made such semantic interpretation with reference to the author not to her work.

According to Genette, “ If the title is indeed the procurer for the book and not for itself, what one must necessarily fear and avoid is the possibility that its seductiveness will work too much in its own favour, at the expense of its text” (94). For “Lady Oracle”, the title started to promise readers more than the work offers or any literary work can ever do. In the case of “Lady Oracle”, the problem does not lie in the quality of poetry but in the transformation that the title went through. It gave the author a presumed power and strengthened her feeling of multiple selves and shame of inadequacy and failure.

People started sending Joan letters to help them get published, calling her to ask for spiritual guidance or foretelling their future. Surprisingly, they derived their attention from the literary merit of the poetry to the spiritual power of the author. Some of them asked Joan if “Lady Oracle was written by angels, sort of like the Book of Mormon” and articles appeared to discuss the mystic aspect of the poetry such as “Lady Oracle: Hoax or Delusion” (250).

Moreover, the attention the media gave Joan terrified her because she was feeling exposed and afraid that people would discover her past and former self, the obese girl who suffered from feelings of shame and inferiority. She thinks: “Now that I was public figure I was terrified that sooner or later someone would find out about me, trace down my former self, wreath me” (251).

To sum up, Lady Oracle is a literal thematic title of Joan’s poetry that brought her attention and fame. In addition, it strengthened her feelings of inadequacy and self-multiplicity because she was made a Lady Oracle.

-*Lady Oracle*: The Title of the Novel:

Atwood's third novel is entitled *Lady Oracle*. It is much concerned with woman as writer, with the writing process and with the reception of a woman's text and her status in the literary scene. In Marilyn Patton's words, "The novel is attempting to imagine a way in which women can take their rightful place as poets and writers. We can think of the various modes of writing in *Lady Oracle* as musings upon the place of gender in the politics of literary production"(41-42).

The novel's title is thematic but not in the literal meaning for Atwood's aim behind its choice is not referring to Joan as an oracle or to the volume of poetry entitled "Lady Oracle". The title is ironic because Atwood's purpose is criticising the critics' sceptical attitudes towards women writings and their focus on their personalities, appearance and personal life. Indeed, issues of women's authorship and the dominance of phallogentric criticism over the literary canon are recurrent topics in Atwood's fiction and criticism. In her essay entitled "Witches," Atwood writes: "A man's work is reviewed for its style and ideas, but all too often a woman's is reviewed for the supposed personality of the author as based on the Jacket photograph. When a man is attacked in print, it's usually for saying what he says; when a woman is attacked in print, it's often for being who she is" (331).

Atwood shows that the critical evaluation of Joan's work is dominated by patriarchal prejudice. The media took the author as a subject rather than the poetry and critics believed that "Lady Oracle" is about her marriage: "It seemed a very angry book," says the critic, 'If I were your husband, I'm not sure I'd like it'(237). Moreover, when Joan meets the Royal Porcupine, he criticises her work as a physical deficiency by linking it to her appearance. He

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puts her talent and the colour of her hair in the same category showing the patriarchal view of women as valued objects for their physical beauty rather than artistic or literary talent.

“‘I guess you’re a publishing success,’ he said. ‘What’s it like to be a successful bad writer?’

I was beginning to feel angry. ‘Why don’t you publish and find out?’ I said

‘Hey’ he said, grinning, ‘temper. You’ve got fantastic hair, anyway. Don’t ever cut it off’” (239).

In addition, Atwood shows how the critical response to Joan’s poetry does not differentiate between fiction and reality, between the woman author as a creator and the character as creation; Joan became called Lady Oracle. “‘Are you Lady Oracle?’” he said ‘It’s the name of my book,’ I said” (238). Moreover, women writers are usually identified with their female characters and judged for their philosophies and attitudes. Being aware of such critical judgements and scepticism, Atwood has skilfully centred her story on the character of a woman writer but one that cannot be identified with the author herself. On the topic, she writes: “With Lady Oracle I was determined to make the character physically unidentifiable with myself, so I made her very fat and I gave her red hair” (Linda Sandler 47).

As a woman writer, Atwood has personally suffered from the critics’ herculean endeavours to find biographical interpretations of her works. In *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction*, Fiona Tolan states that “Joan’s experience of this intrusive analysis is not untypical, and women writers in particular, such as, for example, Mary Shelley, the Brontë sisters and Virginia Woolf have always received an enormous amount of biographical

speculation. Atwood has been subject to this form of textual analysis herself, and her disapproval of its techniques is evident” (66).

By entitling the whole novel *Lady Oracle*, Atwood is ironically criticising the prejudiced critical views that limit women’s art and creation to a mere projection of personal experiences. Such type of criticism undermines women’s talents as imaginative writers. Lorraine York maintains that “Margaret Atwood’s relation to biography and autobiography has been the subject of many controversies. Like many writers, she steadfastly resists attempts to read her works as simple reflections of personal experiences; they are as she constantly reminds her readers, artistic creations that may draw upon but not be reduced to observed experience” (28).

Atwood entitles her parody of Gothics *Lady Oracle* to ironically prove the critical disorientation when reacting to a woman’s text because at the end of the novel Joan discovers that her poetry is about her relationship with her mother. The latter is the lady in the mirror and in the poem.

3.2.1.2. The Illustration:

The illustration of the cover is as significant as the title for it is chosen to convey a visual message to the public and is generally the most outstanding part of the cover that attracts the eyes of the reader even before reading the title. The illustration of the cover is generally changed with new editions or with adaptations of the novel into movies. However, we believe that the illustration of the first edition is the authentic one that deserves analysis because it is chosen or agreed on by the author herself for the relationship she thinks it has

with the text or for the function she has chosen it for. In addition, its importance stems from its temporality; it is part of what Genette terms as “the *original* paratext” (5).

The first function of the illustration is **to decorate (A 1)** the cover and make it more attractive. However, it has more profound functions with permanent effects on the reader’s memory. First, **it emphasizes (C1.1)** Joan’s feeling of double identity related to her body image. The illustration presents a figure of a fat lady in pink without details or traits of the woman, surrounding an image of a woman whose traits correspond to the description of Joan in the novel. Joan suffers from a multiplicity of identity because she sees herself as a fat woman although she managed to lose weight and become a beautiful thin woman. In addition, she identifies herself with her gothic romances’ female protagonists and publishes these gothics as Louisa. K. Delacourt while her husband and society know her as Joan Foster, the authoress of a volume of poetry entitled “Lady Oracle”.

However, the illustration emphasizes Joan’s self-image for people sees her as a thin beautiful woman while she sees herself surrounded by the shape of a “fat lady” she saw in the Canadian National Exhibition she attended with her aunt Lou when she was a child. Although, she has never attended the freak show, she continued to have fantasies about her the rest of her life.

The illustration first, **translates (B.1.7)** Joan’s fantasies of the fat lady by repeating the description in the novel into a visual form. The shape of the fat lady in the illustration corresponds to Joan’s description in the novel: “She was even fatter than I had imagined her [...] fatter than the crude picture of her painted on the hoarding, much fatter than me. She was wearing pink tights with spangles, a short fluffy pink skirt, satin ballet slippers and, on her

head, a sparkling tiara. She carried a diminutive pink umbrella; this was a substitute for the wings which I longed to pin on her” (102).

Second, it **complements (5.2)** the text because the image of the woman surrounded by the shape of the fat lady corresponds to the textual description of Joan, the young beautiful woman. She is described as a beautiful woman with waist-long red hair. The latter attracted most literary magazines to comment on her appearance: “Joan Foster, celebrated author of *Lady Oracle*, looking like a lush Rossetti portrait, radiating intensity, hypnotized the audience with her unearthly...(The Toronto Star). Prose-poetess Joan Foster looked impressively Junoesque in her flowing red hair and green robe; unfortunately she was largely inaudible...(The Globe and Mail)” (14).

Finally, the illustration of the cover **models cognitive process (C.3.2.1)** because it provides a visual representation of abstract process. Joan suffers from a complex of double identity; such complex is related to her body. As an overweight child, she suffered from her mother’s dissatisfaction, control and unsuccessful attempts to force her to lose weight. When she managed to lose weight and become a thin girl, she continued to see herself as a fat woman for she believes there are only two categories of people fat and thin.

Joan’s complex of double identity creates a feeling of shame that makes her hide her past from anyone in her life including her husband Arthur, “But hadn’t my life always been double? There was always that shadowy twin, thin when I was fat, fat when I was thin” (246). In addition, her mother’s rejection because of obesity during her childhood continues to appear in her moments of weakness as fantasies: “How much better for me if I’d been accepted for what I was and had learned to accept myself” (103). All these psychological or

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cognitive processes of double identity, suffering and shame are presented in a visual representation which is imagined by Joan herself in the novel.

3.2.2. The Intertitles:

Intertitles are used in *Lady Oracle* in a purely designative way. The novel is divided into five unequal parts, consisting of a number of unequal chapters in the following pattern:

Part One: 1-4 chapters

Part Two: 5-11 chapters

Part Three: 12-18 chapters

Part Four: 19-29 chapters

Part Five: 30-37 chapters

In addition to designative titles, italics and space divisions are used to solve the problem of ambiguity. The latter may arise due to the fragmentation of the text which contains extracts from Joan's gothic romances and volume of poetry. Italics are used for all the passages written by Joan and space divisions are used for two purposes:

-First, they are used to divide the chapters into smaller sections though not in a regular way.

-Second, they exist to separate extracts from Joan's gothic romances and poetry from the narrative.

3.2.3. The Function of the Paratext:

After analysing the different parts of the paratext of *Lady Oracle*, we can say that in reference to the functions suggested by Daniel Peraya and Marie-Claire Nyssen, the paratext of the novel has two functions:

3.2.3.1. The Function of Constructed Information:

The paratext including the illustration, the title, the author's name and the genre indication plays a function of constructed information because it plays a role in the construction of the text's meaning. From the paratext, we understand the work's generic category for the genre indication shows that it is a novel and the author's name suggests that it is a Canadian woman's text while its title and illustration refer to the protagonists suffering from multiplicity of identity.

3.2.3.2. The Function of Specific Identification:

The paratext of the novel visualises aspects of Joan's psychological problems particularly her feeling of double identity related to her body image.

3.3. *The Handmaid's Tale*:

3.3.1. The Front Cover:

The Handmaid's Tale is Margaret Atwood's sixth novel that was published in 1985. Its front cover is white in colour, the name of the author is written on the top in big capitalised font while the title is in the bottom in bigger red font. Between the two is an illustration designed by Tad Aronowicz.

3.3.1.1. The Title:

The Handmaid's Tale is the title of Atwood's dystopian novel. According to Genette's categorising of titles, it can be classified as a mixed title, however, in the reverse. Genette believes that mixed titles consist of two parts, the first is always designating the genre while the second indicates the theme; it can be summarised as:

Title = generic indicator + theme

However, in the case of Atwood's dystopian novel, the form is as follows

Title = theme + generic indicator

Such form is possible due to the specific characteristics of English as a language. Instead of writing *The Tale of the Handmaid*, the use of the possessive "s" makes the reverse possible: *The Handmaid's Tale*, a form which emphasises the importance of the handmaid as protagonist and narrator.

The use of the article "The" suggests that the story is of one person in particular while referring to such person with the word "handmaid" shows that she represents a whole category or class in the new regime. The name of the protagonist is Offred but it is not used in the title because the focus is not on her as a person but on the implications of a new constructed gender role played by fertile women in the Republic of Gilead for their existence and survival in the new system are closely bound to their effectiveness in being handmaids.

The Handmaid is the thematic part of the title; it has theological origins as it is used in the Old Testament to refer to a female servant: "When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister, and she said to Jacob. Give me children or I shall die!...Then

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she said Here is my maid Bilhah; go into her, that she may bear upon my knees, and even I may have children through her” (Genesis 30: 1-3).

This scene seems to be an inspiration for the crisis of Atwood’s novel because it has been imitated by the authority of Gilead in a strikingly literal way. The society of Gilead is threatened by infertility and fertile women were chosen to be handmaids devoted to procreation.

Atwood’s dystopian novel envisions the world in the near future of the 80’s in America if the right wing took control and put its religious fundamentalism into practice and pollution reached its catastrophic results on the environment. In fact Atwood’s inspiration came in 1981, in a dinner with a friend when they discussed religious fundamentalism. In 1984, Atwood started preparing a file that contained news about the problems of that time and reading the Bible closely. Coral Ann Howells believes that the file contained

Pamphlets from Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace...beside reports of atrocities in Latin America, Iran and the Philippines, together with items of information on new reproductive technologies, surrogate motherhood, and forms of institutionalized birth control from Nazi Germany to Ceasescus’ Romania... The clippings file contained a lot of material on the New Right with its warnings about the “Birth Death,” its anti-feminism...its racism and its strong underpinnings in the Bible Belt (14).

The second part of the title “Tale” is supposed to indicate the generic category of the book. Atwood’s choice of the word suggests that the story is a personal account that can be doubted. In fact, the ambiguous title is appropriate as it refers to a psychologically disturbing

story that resists generic categorisation. “Alternatively defined as science fiction, dystopic nightmare, futuristic prophecy, slave narrative or satiric romance, *The Handmaid's Tale* expands beyond such limiting frameworks as it explores a potential future” (Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson 53).

Most critics situate the novel within dystopian fiction in addition to Atwood's own statement in many interviews after the publication of the novel that it is written to be a dystopian novel. Amin Malak states that “While the major dystopian features can clearly be located in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the novel offers two distinct additional features: feminism and irony” (84).

As a title, *The Handmaid's Tale* is positively tempting as it prepares the reader for a personal account of terrifying experience in a dystopia presented from a feminine angle. The richness of Atwood's work contributed to its success even in academic contexts as a warning against a man-made nightmare. “At the college level, the book shows up on the syllabi of courses in ‘economics, political science, sociology, film, business, and other disciplines outside the humanities, and it has been adopted by several universities (e.g. George Mason, Miami University) as a required text for all undergraduates” (Harold Bloom 14). Indeed, Atwood's imagination of a future based on present crises provided the reader with more than expected from science fiction. The horror of such dystopia came from its probability as a logical end of a combination of circumstances and factors.

3.3.1.2. The Illustration:

The Handmaid's Tale's illustration is designed by Tad Aronowicz. It is a surrealistic painting of two characters: a man dressed in clothes that seem to belong to the far past rather

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than the near future in addition to a naked infantilised woman held by the man. Red is dominating the cover is red which is a key colour in the tale used for the costumes of the handmaids.

The first function of the illustration is **to decorate A.1** the cover by providing a visual message that raises the reader's attention. In addition, the illustration's strange proportions and combination of colours **elicits the emotions A.2** of the reader because he becomes curious and expects unusual setting or events that will be provided by the novel which is a psychologically disturbing dystopia.

Furthermore, the cover's design and the text have **common referent B.1.3** because the man is the commander who represents the power of theocracy. In addition, the infantilised woman is the handmaid who is represented in such an image because she is denied her humanity or any sensational or sexual desires, instead, she is treated as a "two-legged womb" (146) for procreation only. Alice M. Palumbo writes: "Women's reproductive capacity is the basis of the state in Gilead; society is constructed to maximize the possibility of reproduction, while making it obvious that women are merely extensions of their reproductive organs. (On the Border: Margaret Atwood's Novels 29).

Finally, the cover's illustration **inspires C.3.3** the reader to ask questions about the possibility of living a similar story such as the one narrated by the protagonist. The image of the infantilised woman held by the commander raises political, questions about the result of the 80's feminist, religious and scientific orientations if combined and followed to the extreme. In "Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Visions: The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake", Coral Ann Howells argues that:

The handmaid's Tale is a product of the 1980's, focusing on the possible consequences of neo-conservative religious and political trends in the United States... [The novel is based on] the explosive conjunction of elements [including] widespread environmental catastrophe, high incidences of infertility, the rise of rightwing Christian fundamentalism as a political force, and deep hostility to the past 1960's feminist movement. (161-162).

As a dystopia, the novel is a warning against man's desire to control and its result in "a future... where everyday experiences get transformed into something sinister" (Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson 53).

3.3.2. The Epigraphs:

Atwood used three epigraphs to open her dystopic novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and set the tone of the work for the reader.

-Epigraph 1:

"When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister, and she said to Jacob. Give me children or I shall die!...Then she said Here is my maid Bilhah; go into her, that she may bear upon my knees, and even I may have children through her" (Genesis 30: 1-3).

The first epigraph is a quote taken from the Bible from Genesis 30:1-3. It narrates Rachel proposal for her husband Jacob to impregnate her handmaid Bilhah in order to have children whom she considers her one while the handmaid is regarded only as an intermediate. The first epigraph, it has two main functions in reference to Genette's theory:

-Commenting on the title:

Most of the readers' first reaction to the *Handmaid's Tale* is thinking about the meaning of the title because the use of the word "handmaid" is not frequent in modern English. However, the first epigraph serves to comment on the title by explaining the key word "handmaid" and providing a theological context for the title.

-Commenting on the text:

The first epigraph introduces the reader to the image of exploiting women bodies for procreation. The Gileadean society took the Biblical reference literally and applied it to create a system of reproduction that includes three persons in one sexual act which aim is solving the problem of infertility and saving the human race from extinction. The epigraph explains many details in the narrative that are based on the Biblical incident which is taken as a justification for dictatorship and exploitation of fertile women by the ruling class to produce children.

In Gilead, infertile upper class women are devalued by the system and must bear the feelings of jealousy, in addition, fertile handmaids are denied any emotional or sexual desires and treated as breeding wombs that are given time limits to produce children or they will be punished by sending them to clean toxic waste in the colonies. The epigraph also explains to the reader why the sexual act becomes a ceremony repeated in a mechanic way as a religious duty performed by the man and the two women involved without any shame or pleasure.

In addition, the choice of the Bible for the first epigraph highlights its use by political systems to control and limit people's choices and freedom in addition to legitimising the systems authority and patriarchy. Karen Stein drives the reader's attention, in "Margaret Atwood's *Modest Proposal: The Handmaid's Tale*" to the use of the Biblical story for the

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benefit of the system by excluding its emotional aspect and using it as a pretext for man's exploitation of women when she writes, "In the guise of a re-population program, Gilead reads the biblical text literally and makes it the basis for the state sanctioned rape, the impregnation ceremony the handmaids must undergo each month. In this recasting of the biblical passage, Gilead obliterates the emotional meaning of the story and, instead, turns a woman's desire into an instrument of male control"(131).

Furthermore, the epigraph shows that the theological dictatorship has used the Bible for its enforcement of political measures by taking it as a pretext for its crimes. In Stein's words,

On a more figurative level, the choice of a biblical text for the epigraph suggests that spiritual as well as political significance is at issue in the novel. The state-controlled religion of Gilead, like the patriarchal Israelite society and the Puritan theocracy of Massachusetts, offers its adherents little spiritual sustenance. Its belief system is a harsh theology based on a judgmental father god rather than on a nurturing divinity. The state cynically selects the texts which it privileges to authorize its political control, and promulgates religious rituals (such as the Salvagings, Particutions and Prayvaganzas) as "steam valve[s] for the female elements." Its written texts are subject to state control.(131)

The Bible is used in the Gileadean society as a source of power because people do not have access to the Bible and the state dictations are religiously justified.

-Epigraph 2:

“But as to myself, having been wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle, visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this proposal...”

Jonathan Swift “A Modest Proposal”

The second epigraph is taken from Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” in which an inhuman solution to Irish people poverty is suggested by considering the children of numbered families as a source of food or selling them as a source of income to overcome hunger and poverty. Swift is being satirical because the British proposal to solve the problem of Irish people is considered modest and better than “vain, idle, visionary thoughts”. However, the proposal offers Irish people a savage system of cannibalism.

-The Epigraph-Effect:

By its mere presence, the second epigraph makes a set of relationships between Atwood’s book and Jonathan Swift’s essay “A Modest Proposal”. It situates the novel in the area of satire because the speaker in the essay is criticising the British political and economic systems that impoverished the Irish people. Similarly, Atwood’s novel is a satire that shows the possible results of environmental scientific and political systems in America.

-Epigraph 3:

The third epigraph is a Sufi proverb that says:

In the desert there is no sign that says,

Thou shalt not eat stones.

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It is taken from Islamic Sufism and has been neglected by literary critics and often oversimplified, compared to the biblical reference, due to its estrangement from their culture. For example, Lucy M. Freibert explains it in relation to ideology in the novel by referring to its literal meaning when she links it to survival and holds that authorities know unneeded regulations and must avoid them because they are obvious (280-292). In addition,, Nancy V Workman analyses the use of the Sufi proverb by Atwood and argues for its allusive nature and deep meaning that are underestimated by most critics. Moreover, she believes that the proverb's meaning is echoed in the actions and the speech of the protagonist Offred when she maintains, in "Sufi Mysticism in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*", that:

In contrast, I feel that the proverb's message is complex in nature, hiding in its core a unifying element which is echoed throughout *The Handmaid's Tale* in the words and actions of Offred, the narrator. Beneath its apparent simplicity lurks a complex alternative vision of reality, compared to the Judeo-Christian tradition which Atwood satirically mocks in her novel. (2)

The third epigraph has two functions:

--Commenting on the text:

There is a thematic relationship between the epigraph and the novel either in its reference to authority regulations in a state of survival or in the protagonist's reactions to the system which bear a kind of Sufi mysticism; a phenomenon that Workman analyses in details in her aforementioned article. For example, she writes

More important than her outward appearance, however, is Offred's attitude to the events that surround her. In two important respects, she demonstrates a Sufi perspective: one, in her inwardness, her attempts to discover and evaluate her own feelings and psychological realities despite the teachings and proclamations of the society that denies them and which refuses to accept their legitimacy; and two, in her need to express that inwardness through language games that appear to be simple or perhaps clever, but which actually reveal complex networks of feelings and ideas.(3)

In addition to the thematic relation between the epigraph and the novel, it shares with it, despite the apparent simplicity of the epigraph, a sense of irony.

-The Epigraph-Effect:

The presence of the Sufi epigraph before Atwood's novel, suggests an aspect of mysticism that readers can hardly understand at the beginning of the novel, however, they can easily guess that the presence of such proverb is certainly not arbitrary.

3.4.3. The Intertitles:

The novel is narrated by its protagonist the handmaid Offred. Originally, it is recorded on tapes as a memoir of her experience under the Gileadan government. The reader, however, does not discover such detail until he reaches the final section of the novel. The latter is divided into sections of days and nights because it is Offred's collection of memories. Atwood comments on the novel's technique: "I had to do it that way. The paper and pencil supply

would have been quite limited. It also allowed for the discontinuous, episodic nature of the narrative” (26).

The novel is arranged by a character named Professor James Darcy Piexioto, director of the Twentieth and Twenty-First century Archives at Cambridge University and his collaborator, Professor Knotly Wade who both transcribed the cassettes left by Offred. The narrative is used in the 12th Symposium on “Gileadan Studies” and it is analysed by the historians in the year 2195 after Gilead has declined and their objectivity in studying the horrors of the system in addition to their dissatisfaction with the lack of sufficient information about the system and the commanders become shocking for the reader who witnessed Offred’s suffering.

Atwood uses indications of time and space as intertitles, a technique borrowed from drama. Such division is appropriate for the novel’s episodic narration resulting from recollections. The novel consists of fifteen major sequences divided into forty six minor sections. The fifteen major sequences are entitled by indications of time and place and enumerated with Roman numbers. They are unequally divided into sections enumerated with Arabic numbers. The fifteen sections constitute Offred’s memoir while the last section entitled Historical Notes is related to the context in which the tale is being analysed and studied in 2195 by historians. We can present the structure of *The Handmaid's Tale* as follows:

I Night 1

II Shopping 23456

III Night7

IV Waiting Room 89101112

V Nap 13

VI Household 14151617

VII Night 17

VII Birth Day 1920212223

IX Night 24

X Soul Scrolls 2526272829

XI Night 30

XII Jezebel's 313233343536373839

XIII Night 40

IX Salvaging 4142434445

XV Night 46

Historical Notes

Atwood's use of intertitles strengthens the reader's perception of the tale as a fragmented text transcribed from the protagonist's recollections. As a narrator, Offred herself questions the validity of her story, admits the insufficiency of language in describing what really happened and mentions her own "reconstruction [of the story that she has chosen to] tell, rather than write" (49).

3.3.4. The Notes: "Historical Notes":

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The notes used after the narrative and entitled “Historical Notes” provide a historical context for the tale. However, the reader is not introduced to this historical context before reading the story, so the academic historical discourse used in the historical notes is seen in parallel to the narrative personal discourse used by Offred in the story. Moreover, it is a challenging discourse that puts the validity of the memoir into question for the lack of historical material evidence. In addition, the objectivity used in such part of the novel offers a re-evaluating of the tale from historical perspective and a manifested detachment from the human and ethical aspects of the narrator’s story. The latter is underestimated and reduced to its historical value while misogynist judgements are still persistent in the academia which seems still male-dominated.

The chapter entitled “Historical Notes” is a partial transcript of the proceedings of the “Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean Studies,” that took place on June 25, 2195 at the University of Denay, Nonavit. It is part of the International historical Association Convention, which provides the readers with twenty-second century’s view of the Gileadean regime and informs them that the regime has failed and resulted in reshaping the powers of the world. It provides the readers with disturbing information that puts their affectionate involvement with Offred’s tale into question, an involvement that started early in the narrative when Offred uses the pronoun “you” to address the reader or in the original form of her story, the listener.

Even the readers’ discovery that the story was originally recorded on tapes and has been transcribed, organised and edited by Professors James Darcy Pieixoto and Knotley Wade makes them shocked because according to the professor’s own word’s the work was based on guesswork. As a narrator, Offred is already pointing out to her construction of some events and the knowledge of certain details provided by Professor Pieixoto strengthens the

unreliability of what is said in contrast to historical facts. In her article “The Handmaid’s Tale: ‘Historical Notes’ and Documentary Subversion,” Dominick. M. Grace writes:

The “Historical Notes” force a purely retrospective re-evaluation of the text, unlike the pseudo-documentary strategies in the vast bulk of such fictions, which almost invariably precede the text or are incorporated throughout it, to signal clearly to the reader their presence. Because there is no hint in the body of the text of the recontextualizing to come at its end, the “Historical Notes” are discontinuous and disjunctive; they invite us to question, rather than accept, the authenticity of what we have just read. They invite an active interrogation of the text.(158)

In Genette’s terms, the notes are authorial added to a narratorial actorial editorial text. Although the “Historical Notes” are a transcript of the proceedings of an academic event, they are however, provided by Atwood herself to accompany the personal narrative recounted by the handmaid. The latter can be considered as a narratorial, actorial, editorial text, a type that does not exist in Genette’s categorisation because the relationships of the senders are complicated in Atwood’s Dystopia.

In fact, her artistry makes the text a blurring of different genres that seldom co-exist in a non exclusive way. The tale was originally an oral personal self-reflexive, reconstruct memoir of the handmaid’s experience under the Gileadean regime. However, it is received by readers after transcriptions, selections and arrangements by the two Historian scholars Darcy Pieixoto and Knotley Wade who chooses its name in homage to Chaucer’s “The Canterbury Tales” which have few in common with the feminine narrative under investigation. Such titling is reflective of the objective historical detached analysis of the recorded experiences

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that are transformed into a literary narrative with its accompanying uncertainty that rises from its oral form by its original narrator to its published form after edition.

In addition, “The Historical Notes” as a paratextual element has many functions that were not identified by Genette due to the novelty of such form that did not appear before the writing of Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Although Genette draws attention to the function of the notes that accompany works of fiction that have historical or philosophical aspects, however, he does not detail the functions of the notes that accompany Dystopia. Indeed, the previously published Dystopia did not provide the reader with another vision of the future of the Dystopia itself. A technique that serves to offer a moving rather than static vision of human experience because the after-dystopia narrative although limited in a scientific objective discourse of academic proceeding becomes reflective of the possibility of repetition of human experience due to the capability of human mind to find excuses to his acts in an objective historical view that makes everything logical due to scientific detachment from ethical judgement and concentrating on referencing and documenting rather than analysing, judging and learning.

Atwood’s dystopia links human experience of desire, necessity, suffering, danger and survival in a cyclic way that evokes different contexts and times, suggesting that the human being is the same when he undergoes certain conditions. Her combination of the epigraphs, the narrative and the notes completes the cycle that makes her novel revise the human experience in different times and lands ranging from Chaucer’s pilgrims to Jacobo’s life to Sufist’s mysticism in the east, to Irish suffering in the century to the 1980’s American misleading ecological, religious and scientific practices to the Gileadean regime in the mid 1980’s to its aftermath in 2195.

The final section of the novel forces the reader to detach himself from “her story” to question its authenticity while being personally concerned with the historian scholar’s scientific objectivity, misogynist remarks and absence of moral consideration of human experience. As a dystopia, Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* is retro directional. We suggest this because it is capable of criticising the present through the futuristic tale and the future of the future through the historical notes which show that some of the seeds that led to the establishment of the Gileadean system still exist including the detachment of science and History from ethical judgement. We humbly, propose that Atwood’s labelling of her novel as futuristic or the critics’ categorising of the book as dytopia are both limiting because the paratextual relations between the different parts of the novel were underestimated. However, when it is seen in light of Genette’s theory, it becomes a whole work of art that can be called “Cyclic Dystopia”.

3.3.5. The Function of the Paratext:

- The Function of Specific Identification:

The paratext represents particular aspects of the text as a dystopia. First, the title suggests that the novel is a personal account of an unnamed protagonist who is referred to as a handmaid which is her gender role in the Gileadan society. Second, the cover’s illustration offers a visual representation of certain elements that exist in the dystopia including power relations. Indeed, the image of the man holding the infantilised woman visualise the power relations between the commanders and their handmaids. The latter are guarantees of continuity for they are possessed by their commanders as procreation creatures to face the threat of human infertility and consequently, extension. According to Amine Malak, “Dystopias...show, in extreme terms, power functioning efficiently and mercilessly to its

optimal totalitarian limit” (82). Handmaids do not have the power to make individual decisions instead; they conform to the dictations of the totalitarian system that has efficient and unquestioned power to exterminate anybody including the commanders for the necessity of survival and the continuity of the Republic.

Moreover, the infantilised naked woman refers to the system’s censorship of any human sensations, desires and hopes while the dominance of the red colour on the cover evokes in the reader an expectation of violence, terror and threat; elements that are dominant in dystopias. Finally, the use of intertitles helps in understanding the construction of the text as recollections recorded on tapes and later transcribed by a character to be used in the 12th Symposium on “Gileadan Studies”.

- The Aesthetic Function:

The novel’s paratext has an aesthetic function because some of its elements do not have an explicit relation to the text; however, they motivate the reader by their ambiguity. The title: *The Handmaid's Tale* does not have an explicit relation with the generic category of the novel especially with the absence of the genre indication. The use of “handmaid” can lead the reader to suppose that the work is a religious retelling of a story in the Bible while the second part of the title “Tale” makes him expect a fantasy or fairytale.

- The Function of Temptation:

The absence of any paratextual element that hints to the reader that the work is a futuristic dystopia creates ambiguity. The latter contributes to the function of tempting the reader. Indeed, the combination of all the elements of the paratext including the title and the

surrealistic cover design give the reader messages that need to be decoded in the process of reading.

3.4. *The Penelopiad*:

3.4.1. The Front Cover:

The front cover of the Canadian edition of *The Penelopiad* is an illustration that contains on the top the name of the author written in capitalised yellow font, below it is the title of the novel *The Penelopiad* written in brown colour, while the emblem of the editor is found on the right top corner of the cover.

3.4.1.1. The Title:

The Penelopiad is Atwood's twelfth novel. It was published in 2005 by Canongate press in the United Kingdom and simultaneously in other thirty two countries including Canada. It is the first book of the collection *The Myths* that was designed as a rewriting of one hundred famous myths by contemporary writers. Atwood rewrote Homer's *The Odyssey* from the point view of his devoted wife Penelope.

In reference to Genette's typology of titles, *The Penelopiad* can be considered as a mixed title because it identifies the theme of the book and its generic category.

-The Thematic part of the Title:

First, the title suggests that the book is about a main character named Penelope who is known in both Greek mythology and literary tradition as the faithful wife of Odysseus, the well-known Greek hero. While Penelope is portrayed in Homer's *The Odyssey* as a minor silenced female character, she is, however, given primary role in Atwood's retelling of the

myth by positioning her as the major character in a revision of a myth which is originally written about Odysseus. In addition, narrative voice is given to Penelope and her twelve hanged maids, the fact that shows the reader that the revision is feminine-centred. In an interview, for *The Guardian*, with Atwood and the stage director Phyllida Lloyd who adapted the book into a theatrical reading performance and gave the role of Penelope to Atwood, the latter maintains that:

[Penelope] is speaking from the world of the dead to the world of the living. She wants to tell “you” that she's not what people thought, that other people had told stories about her, but now she is down in the underworld she doesn't care about social convention, she's going to tell her own story. She lives or dies depending upon which version of the myth you are reading or listening to.

Atwood's use of gothic elements is present in this rewriting of both the myths surrounding the character of Penelope and *The Odyssey* as a literary work. Penelope is a ghost telling her story from the underworld to twenty first century readers; however, her voice is balanced by those of the hanged maids in *The Odyssey*. Such telling of a story is typically Atwoodian for she offers readers a multiplicity of truths putting them in a position where they cannot find the reality among the several possible told stories while the authenticity of the narrative voices is put into question.

For the case of Penelope, the reader is given several versions of her story. First, Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* includes rumours that she slept with her suitors in the absence of her husband Odysseus. Second, *The Odyssey* portrays her as a faithful wife who kept waiting for her husband's return for twenty years while raising his son Thelemachus and refusing the proposals of her suitors by making a shroud that she unknots at night. Third, the story is told

by Penelope whose voice is doubted when accompanied by those of her hanged maids. Truth is kept secret for all these versions of the story do not provide the readers with the reason behind the execution of the maids and the true nature of Penelope assumed faithfulness.

-The Generic part of the Title:

Atwood's narrative is considered as a novel but its title and formal aspects suggest different generic categories. The title *The Penelopiad* is formulated in the same traditional fashion of naming epic poetry. It contains the suffix "ad" which is added to different names in Greek to denote poems about heroes. In Greek, the stem is usually used to refer to a hero or a nation and the suffix to the epic poem about his adventures or its glories respectively. Examples include the famous works: The Greek *Iliad* about Achilles and later, the Latin *Aeneid* about Aeneas and the Portuguese *The Lusiads* as a national epic.

According to the old fashion of using such type of naming, the work is an epic poem about Penelope, Odysseus' wife. However, as a character in Greek mythology or *The Odyssey*, Penelope is the silent female, who is known only for her loyalty and patience in the absence of her husband, an image that is contradicted by scandalous rumours about her in other mythological sources; she is not a divine beauty like Helene or a goddess like Athena.

The title invites a reading of an epic poem, but the reader finds a postmodern metafictional parody of the Greek epic. In her article "Margaret Atwood and the re-invention of myth in *The Penelopiad*", Sigrid Renaux contends that there is a contrast between the formal aspect of the *Penelopiad* including the title and epic poems, "a contrast [that] results not only from the comparison of the title with other epics – the majority of which have a man as their hero, or the glorious feats of a nation, such as *The Aeneid*, *La Chanson de Roland*, *El Poema del Cid*, *Os Lusiadas*, *La Henriade*, *La Messiade*, among so many others – but also

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from the fact that this woman did not become known for any heroic or other feat of far-reaching effect” (69).

Being a parody of Homer’s *The Odyssey*, the novel is a combination of different generic categories including Penelope’s narrative interspersed by a chorus line of the twelve hanged maids giving voice in various narrative forms including different lyrical and dramatic pieces in addition to an anthropological lecture and a videotape of Odysseus’ trial. In fact, Atwood’s choice of using the form of a novel to rewrite *The Odyssey* is deliberate for its nature allows for experimentation in form, multiplicity of narrative voice and vision. In her article “‘A Chorus Line’: Margaret Atwood’s *Penelopiad* at the Crossroads of Narrative, Poetic and Dramatic Genres”, Susanne Jung contends that

Margaret Atwood’s *Penelopiad* is thus structurally and thematically multivoiced, a polylogue offering multiple perspectives. By choosing to separate Penelope’s first-person account from the account of the maids-as-chorus, the novel appears structurally with, on the one hand, an autodiegetic narrator (Penelope), and, on the other hand, the speaker/narrator of the interludes (the maids as chorus line). An integration of both voices into one (prose) narrative is withheld throughout the novel. (45-46)

The contrast between the title and the text it refers to is ideological because Atwood has chosen to write an epic about a woman in a postmodern form that challenges the old Greek epic. In “Five Ways of Looking at the *Penelopiad*”, Coral Anne Howells states that “Atwood’s project is to retell *The Odyssey* as ‘herstory’ as she engages in the kind of feminist revisionist mythmaking at which, in common with H  l  ne Cixous and Adrienne Rich, she is so adept.” She also draws the readers’ attention to Atwood’s frequent use and appropriation of myths legends and folktales in her fictional writings by referring to Sharon R. Wilson: “As the

critic Sharon R. Wilson has remarked in her study of Atwood's mythological intertexts, 'Atwood has used mythology in much the same way she has used other intertexts like folk tales, fairy tales, and legends,' replaying the old stories in new contexts and from different perspectives—frequently from a woman's point of view—so that the stories shimmer with new meanings" (8). Indeed, Atwood's revision of the *Odyssey* was done on two levels: the thematic and the formal as it came as a postmodern female-centred retelling in a hybrid fragmented form.

As a title, *The Penelopiad* is tempting to a great extent because it designates a retelling of a work that has exerted influence on the literary, cultural and critical scene for centuries. *The Odyssey* remains one of the most influential works that acquired enduring power and fame that attracted several retellings appropriations and revisions in various times and forms as well. In addition, Atwood's retelling of *The Odyssey* is innovative as it appears in the form of an experimental novel with a silenced female character and twelve hanged maids as its narrators because the readers' first encounter with the word the *Penelopiad* raises many questions that only reading the book can answer.

3.4.1.2. The Illustration:

The front cover of the novel is an unbordered painting of a landscape containing a dark sky with stars a sea and swimming ducks and a woman standing with her back to the sea and her front to the reader, she seems like someone coming out of the sea while looking at her right. The painting is illustrative rather than realistic and the dominant colours used are black and white. The woman is Penelope whose appearance resembles that of a ghost because she is represented in only one colour which is white and which is usually associated with ghost drawings.

In addition, some of the elements included in the setting are symbolic and can be directly deciphered by readers who have knowledge of the myth. For example, she seems coming from the sea where a purple duck was swimming, an image that alludes to her story when she was a child. Originally named Arnakia, Penelope is the daughter of a sea nymph Peribeoa and king Icarius of Sparta. She was thrown into the sea by her father but a flock of purple-striped ducks saved her which was considered as an omen. After the incident her father named her Penelope which is the Greek name for duck. The background of the illustration symbolises penelope's childhood while the focus in the illustration is on her as she occupies the centre of the cover.

The illustration is used to **decorate A1** the cover and **motivates A3.2** the reader to understand its visual message. Moreover, it has **common referent B1.3** with the text because both of them represent Penelope as the major character in a revision of a famous literary work based on a myth of male heroism. The character of Odysseus is given minor importance as he is not represented in the illustration of the cover and is seen in the novel from a feminine perspective. In addition, the illustration is used to **emphasise C1.1** the role played by Penelope in the novel that seems as her own appropriation and manipulation of the Odyssey.

3.4.2. The Epigraphs:

The two epigraphs that precede Atwood's narrative in *The Penelopiad* are taken from Homer's *The Odyssey* to evoke two major details that attracted Atwood in reading the Odyssey: the real character of Penelope and the hanging of the twelve maids after being charged of treachery.

-Epigraph 1:

... Shrewd Odysseus!. You are a fortunate man to have won a wife of such pre-eminent virtue! How faithful was your flawless Penelope, Icarius' daughter! How loyally she kept the memory of the husband of her youth! The glory of her virtue will not fade with the years, but the deathless gods themselves will make a beautiful song for mortal ears in honour of the constant Penelope.
(Homer Book 24 .191-194)

The first epigraph is a speech of the ghost of Agamemnon in Hades who listens to the ghost of Amphimedon telling him of the faithfulness of Odysseus' wife Penelope, her plan of knitting the shroud to keep the suitors away and her husband's revenge by killing the suitors and hanging the maids. Such image of Penelope's reputation of loyalty and virtue circulating among the dead and the living and growing to become a legend is of paramount importance because Atwood will deconstruct the phallogentric constructed archetype of such female image in Greek mythology and give voice to Penelope and the maids to hear another version of the story, a version that is quite far from the angelic image constructed by Homer or the scandalous portrayal circulated in oral tradition.

Atwood's portrayal is a questioning, a revelation, and offering plurality of vision that involves the reader's analysis to find answers to the first of the two questions that she asks before writing *The Penelopiad*: "what was Penelope really up to?" (xv). The questions appear in the introduction, another paratextual element that is used by Atwood to provide the context of the work, explain the significance of the epigraphs and prepare the reader for the revision of the myth and *The Odyssey* as well.

-Epigraph 2:

... he took a cable which had seen service on a blue-bowed ship, made one end fast to a high column in the portico, and threw the other over the round-house, high up, so that their feet would not touch the ground. As when long-winged thrushes or doves get entangled in a snare ... so the women's heads were held fast in a row, with nooses round their necks, to bring them to the most pitiable end. For a little while their feet twitched, but not for very long. (Homer Book 22, 470-473)

The second epigraph is a description of the hanging of the twelve maids who were condemned to death by Odysseus for their disloyalty and their unfaithful act of sleeping with the suitors but they took the blame for an act that was planned and supervised by Penelope herself. Their hanging is among the primary concerns of Atwood in writing the *Penelopiad* as she explains it in an interview:

The maids were executed by Telemachus without being given the chance to defend themselves, but they are given voice in the *Penelopiad* to describe what happened and expose that Penelope had a hand in their killing because she wanted to hide what they knew forever. They are portrayed as victim ghosts hunting Odysseus in the underworld. Their voice is another telling of the story that is put into comparison with Penelope's own recounting and provides the previously mentioned plurality of vision.

-Commenting on the Text:

Atwood uses allographic epigraphs whose author is Homer. They provide the reader with the explanation of the two major issues being discussed in her rewriting of *The Odyssey* and the myth. They offer the two main images: the faithful Penelope and the hanging of the maids; images that are challenged in *The Penelopiad*. Atwood states in the introduction:

I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and to the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus which focuses on two questions that must pose themselves after any close reading of *The Odyssey*: what led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to. The story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water; there are too many inconsistencies. I've always been haunted by the hanged maids; and, in *The Penelopiad*, so is Penelope herself (xv).

The epigraphs are not really commenting on the text but justifying certain traits of the text because the latter is guided by Atwood's determination to offer a rewriting of the images included in the epigraphs. In her article "Margaret Atwood and the Re-invention of myth in *the Penelopiad*", Sigrid Renaux analyses the relationship between the epigraphs and the text in details when she writes:

The epigraphs which should guide the text will thus in their turn be misled by the text, for while *The Odyssey* tells us about Penelope by means of the image projected by Agamemnon in the first epigraph, Atwood will make Penelope speak of herself and present her version/subversion of her own story, thereby deconstructing her Homeric image. And, while in the second epigraph it is Homer who describes the episode of the twelve maids in the epic past of the

narrative, in Atwood, besides Eurycleia – Odysseus' faithful nurse – narrating the fact to Penelope (chapter xxiii), the maids themselves will also narrate their story (chapters ii, iv, viii, x, xiii, xvii, xxi, xxiv, xxvi, xxviii, xxix), simultaneously blaming Odysseus, Telemachus (chapters ii, x, xxvi, xxviii) and even Penelope (chapter xxi) for their hanging, as well as also deconstructing the Homeric images of Odysseus (chapter xiii) and of Penelope (chapter xxi).(4)

Thus, in the case of *The Penelopiad*, the epigraphs are antecedents of the text because the text is meant to be a rewriting of *The Odyssey*. In fact, the paratextual relations between the epigraphs and the text in the *Penelopiad* become intertextual in nature, a phenomenon that will be discussed in details in the forth chapter.

3.4.3. The Intertitles:

The novel starts with a dedication by Atwood that says: For my family, then two epigraphs from Homer's *The Odyssey* followed by an introduction to the novel. The novel is divided into Penelope's narrative interspersed by the maid's chorus lines; however, the titling is complex due to the fragmentary nature of the text. Penelope's narrative is divided into chapters entitled by thematic titles and the chorus lines are entitled by mixed titles while all the titles are enumerated with Roman numbers.

The use of intertitles in the *Penelopiad* is explained as follows:

-Introduction:

Atwood provides the reader with a background concerning the myth of Odysseus, focusing on his return and Penelope's part in the story, as presented in Homer's *The Odyssey* and drives the reader's attention to the fact that there are other oral resources to the myth that Atwood took into consideration while writing the novel. In addition, she states her desire

behind choosing to retell the story of Penelope and her inclusion of the maids' chorus lines when she states:

I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and to the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus which focuses on two questions that must pose themselves after any close reading of *The Odyssey*: what led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to? The story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water: there are too many inconsistencies. I've always been haunted by the hanged maids; and, in *The Penelopiad*, so is Penelope herself. (Atwood xv)

After the introduction, all the intertitles are enumerated using Roman numbers. The titles of the chapters of Penelope's narrative appear as purely thematic ones indicating the content of the part of the story they tell while the chorus lines are entitled by mixed titles composed of two parts. The first is usually thematic and the second refers to the generic category of the chapter.

- i. A Low Art
- ii. **The Chorus Line: A Rope-Jumping Rhyme**
- iii. My Childhood
- iv. The Chorus Line: Kiddie Mourn, A **Lament** by the Maids
- v. Asphodel
- vi. My Marriage
- vii. The Scar
- viii. The Chorus Line: If I Was a Princess, A **Popular Tune**
- ix. The Trusted Cackle-Hen
- x. The Chorus Line: The Birth of Telemachus, An **Idyll**

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- xi. Helen Ruins My Life
- xii. Waiting
- xiii. The Chorus Line: The Wily Sea Captain, A **Sea Shanty**
- xiv. The Suitors Staff Their Faces
- xv. The Shroud
- xvi. Bad Dreams
- xvii. The Chorus Line: Dreamboats, A **Ballad**
- xviii. News of Helen
- xix. Yelp of Joy
- xx. Slanderous Gossip
- xxi. The Chorus Line: The Perils of Penelope, A **Drama**
- xxii. Helen Takes a Bath
- xxiii. Odysseus and Thelemacus Snuff the Maids
- xxiv. The Chorus Line: An Anthropology **Lecture**
- xxv. Heart of Flint
- xxvi. The Chorus Line: The **Trial** of Odysseus, as Videotaped by the Maids
- xxvii. Home Life in Hades
- xxviii. The Chorus Line: We're Walking Behind You, A **Love Song**
- xxix. **Envoi**

Notes

Acknowledgments

The parts of the titles indicating the genres used in writing the chorus line are written in bold type. They can be divided into two parts: those that refer to the generic category of the chorus line such as the Ballad, the sea shanty and the idyll and those that refer to poetry while

the text they designate is a kind of blurring verse and prose in one genre. For example, The Love song and the lament are written in verse but some poetic techniques including parallelism are used in writing them.

Atwood's use of intertitles is appropriate because the text is marked by polyphony, it is a mixture of different generic categories and the titling guides the reader to recognise such variety. It is also a postmodern parody of the Greek epic which allows the readers to see different versions of the myth and hear the silenced female voices. In Nunes Ruan's words:

By choosing to write a novel, Atwood is able to expose the conventionality of not only the epic, but also of the other genres used by the maids in their chorus line. The novel, unlike the epic, allows the story to be fragmented, a fact which creates the uncertainty of who might be telling the whole story in *The Penelopiad*: Penelope herself or the maids? (231)

The *Penelopiad* is a thematically and formally highly crafted text which comes as stylistically and ideologically challenging a long standing myth and Greek epic: *The Odyssey*.

3.4.4. The Notes:

Atwood added a section entitled "Notes" to give the reader the references she used in writing *The Penelopiad* and cite the works she found beneficial in providing her with knowledge about Penelope's family and other portrayals in mythology. In addition, she acknowledges the fact that she used the maid's chorus as a stylistic imitation of Greek drama. The content of the "Notes" make them discursive original notes that stand as a logical continuity of the text because they cite references and authorities and explain the use of a particular technique in the text which is the maid's chorus.

In reference to Genette's theory, this type of notes does not constitute a paratextual element; rather, it is a continuity of the text. Although, Genette made a distinction between

discursive texts and texts of fiction, the use of notes in Atwood's *The Penelopiad* is a case that resembles that which is used in discursive texts and although Genette does not provide a specific category for such, it has been used by other modern writers like T. S. Eliot in his *The Waste Land*. We can say that such use of notes appears to guide readers when the text has intertextual relations with other text. In other words, the use of discursive original notes with fiction coincides with the theory of intertextuality.

3.4.5. The Function of the Paratext:

-The Function of Specific Identification:

The paratext of *The Penelopiad* offers particular aspects of the textual referent. For example, the title *The Penelopiad* guides the reader to a reading of an epic that parallels Greek epics; however, it is about Penelope the wife of Odysseus rather than a famous hero in Greek mythology while the intertitles show that it is written in a combination of narrative voices and generic categories. Both aspects, specific to Atwood's text, situate it within postmodern parodic novels instead of traditional Greek epics. In addition, the illustration serves to visualise certain details in Penelope's background.

-The Function of Constructed Information:

The paratext including the name of the author, the publisher, the title, the illustration, the epigraphs and the intertitles plays a role in informing the reader about the text's thematic and formal aspects, in addition to its intertextual aspect as a rewriting of Homer's *The Odyssey* by a Canadian woman writer from female-centred perspective.

-The Function of Temptation:

As a novel's paratext, it is tempting for its exposing of the challenging relationship between its representative aspects and the novel as text referent, on one hand, and the Greek epic as intertextual reference on the other hand. For example, the title *The Penelopiad* as a

representative element suggests that the text will be a Greek epic, but the text referent is an experimental novel composed of a mixture of poetic and prose genres and the intertextual reference is *The Odyssey* where Penelope is a minor silenced character of no great deeds except her virtue as a faithful wife, which is also questioned by circulating oral myths about her.

3.5. Conclusion:

Atwood's aesthetics speak the political from the title to the cover's illustration to the notes; her formal arrangements of her novels tempt the reader to keep reading her literature which is surprising in its challenge to normality.

**Chapter Four: Analysis of
the Intertextual Relations in
*Lady Oracle, The Handmaid's
Tale* and *The Penelopiad***

Chapter Four: Analysis of the Intertextual Relations in *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's*

Tale and *The Penelopiad*

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4.4. *The Penelopiad*

4.4.1. Quotations

4.4.1.1. *The Odyssey*

4.5. Conclusion

4.1. Introduction:

Margaret Atwood is known for her use of intertextual references in her novels which are often multilayered, rich with myths and fairy tales and psychologically penetrating. A use that is often employed to convey her ideological interests in power politics, gender politics and women's writing of literature. References to myths, folk tales and fairy tales are not exclusive to Atwood's fiction, on the contrary, they appear in her poetry and criticism as fundamental metaphors, symbols and parallels.

Moreover, Atwood's use of intertexts is closely related to her ideas concerning patriarchal attitudes towards female protagonists especially female artists. She writes in "The Curse of Eve-Or, What I learned in School," "To return to my problem, the creation of a fictional female character...But my hypothetical character would have a choice of many literary ancestresses... Rapunzel and her tower, Cinderella and her sackcloth and ashes, Beauty and the Beast, the wives of Bluebeard (all but the last), Mrs. Radcliffe's persecuted maidens fleeing seduction and murder"(31).

4.2. *Lady Oracle*:

Published in 1976, *Lady Oracle* is Atwood's postmodern novel that parodies gothic romances by a self-reflexive narrator who takes the reader in a physical and psychological journey of metamorphosis of the novel's protagonist and narrator. It is Atwood's most rewritten novel that takes her concern in the issue of women's literature to different levels of presentation ranging from the textual to the thematic and the symbolic.

The novel is full of intertextual references that are primarily associated with the protagonist's self-image in a patriarchal society. Joan Foster goes through different phases of development and change while suffering from a multiplicity of identities that she tries to keep separate in vain.

-Self-image versus stereotypes of femininity:

Joan's suffering with social view started since she was a child because her overweight made her feel less beautiful than other girls of her age and engraved her feelings of being rejected by her dominative demanding mother. As a child, she suffered from the desire of her mother to shape her into the image of femininity since an early age without giving her a chance to have an independent identity and dreams of her own.

I can never remember calling her anything but Mother, never once of those childish diminutives; I must have, but she must have discouraged it. Our relationship was professionalised early. She was to be the manager, the creator, the agent; I was to be the product. I suppose one of the most important things she wanted from me was gratitude. She wanted me to do well, but she wanted to be responsible for it....Her plans for me weren't specific. They were vague, but large, so that whatever I did accomplish was never the right thing. (67).

Joan's mother could not succeed in her life as she could not get a satisfactory job and was obliged to raise her daughter alone because her husband left them to go to war then to come and does not take his responsibilities as a husband and father. Joan describes him, "My father didn't come back until I was five, and before that he was only a name, a story. But when the time came, a stranger walked through the door, kissed my mother and then me, and

sat down at the table. He seemed very tired and said little. He brought nothing and did nothing, and that remained his pattern. Most of the time he was simply an absence”(69).

It is evident in the novel that Joan suffered from an imposition of an identity that is quite stranger to her. The desired image of femininity presented by the American actress Joan Crawford led her mother to name her Joan after the American actress and whenever she complains about her daughter's misbehaviour, she starts with “to think why I named you after Joan Crawford,” a statement that filled the girl with shame and feelings of inferiority because she was fat. She could not even find a logical reason why such unreal media personality would be imposed on her.

My mother named me after Joan Crawford. This is one of the things that always puzzled me about her. Did she name me after Joan Crawford because she wanted me to be like the screen character she played-beautiful, ambitious, ruthless, and destructive to men- or because she wanted me to be successful? Joan Crawford worked hard, she had willpower, and she built herself up from nothing, according to my mother. Did she give me someone else's name because she wanted me never to have a name of my own? (42)

Joan's mother's interference in her life filled her childhood with traumatic experiences due to her overweight. In addition, her constant attempts to shape her daughter's personality and body according to the social stereotypes of femininity led her later as an adult to suffer from illusions related to her previous body image as a fat person though she forcedly managed to lose weight and become an attractive woman.

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Through Joan's suffering with obesity, the female body as an object of desire and a symbol of physical beauty in society is exposed as a major theme in the novel. Later after becoming thin, Joan remembers society's attitudes towards her: "What a shame, how destructive to me were the attitudes of society, forcing me into a mold of femininity that I could never fit, stuffing me into those ridiculous pink tights, those spangles, those outmoded, cramping ballet slippers. How much better for me if I'd been accepted for what I was and had learned to accept myself, too" (103).

Moreover, the female body is deprived of freedom because of the anticipations of society and sometimes its physical beauty is revered by the male-dominated ideology as more important than any achievement it can do. Since her childhood, Joan did not possess her body and could not feel proud of the identity associated with that body. As a child, she resisted her mother's control by overeating "By this time I was eating steadily, doggedly, stubbornly, anything I could get. The war between myself and my mother was on in earnest; the disputed territory was my body...my body advanced inch by inch towards her across the dining-room table, in this at least I was undefeated"(71). Later, Joan was forced to lose weight as a condition to inherit Aunt Lou's money. After becoming an attractive woman, she feels ashamed of telling her husband Arthur that she was once overweight and later when she publishes her poetry, Royal Porcupine criticises her art and comments on the beauty of her red hair as something more valuable than her writings.

When Joan becomes a writer of gothic romances, she develops a multiplicity of identities, some of which result from her identifications with her protagonists and her entrance into a state which blurs fictitious and real worlds. Atwood presents Joan's struggle as a

writer in a male-dominated consumptive society through thematic, metafictional and intertextual techniques.

4.2.1. Allusions:

4.2.1.1. *The Red Shoes* Tale:

Atwood is known to be influenced by Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tales that she read in her childhood; however three of them in particular appear as intertexts in *Lady Oracle*. The first is *The Red Shoes* as the novel refers to Anderson's tale and the 1948 film, based on it, starring Moira Shearer and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. The movie is a modernised treatment of the major theme of the tale but it differs from it in its ending.

The Fairy Tale:

The original tale turns around vanity and religious punishment and forgiveness. It tells the story of a poor girl Karen who becomes fascinated with red shoes and wears them despite society's disapproval. She wears them on her mother's funeral and to the church where a crippled soldier orders the shoes to dance, so she continues dancing without being able to control her feet. An angel curses her to dance until she becomes a skeleton; however, the girl asks for forgiveness and is unable to wait for his answer because the shoes continue dancing. After bleeding because of dance, she repents and asks an executioner to cut her feet and he gives her carved wooden feet instead. Finally, the angel appears with forgiveness and Karen was able to attend the ceremony in the church, her heart becomes full of happiness and peace that it breaks and her soul rises to Heaven. According to Sharon Rose Wilson, "The Red Shoes' has a straightforward moralistic story line. Because Karen sets "dress and grandeur

and beauty” above religious and familial obligations, she is, for a time, condemned to do, unceasingly, that which she “wrongfully” chooses to do: dance” (125). Although the original story ends with redemption and forgiveness, the film that is based on the story ends with the actress’s suicide and failure.

-The Film:

In 1948, *The Red Shoes* appeared as a dramatic British film about a ballerina whose role was played by Moira Shearer. It was directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger and became famous in USA. The film presents a red-haired ballerina named Vicky who is obliged to choose between her love for dancing and her love for her husband Julian who obliges her to stop dancing despite being an artist himself. Vicky is a successful ballerina starring a Ballet called *The Red Shoes* which tells a story close to the fairy tale by Hans Christian Anderson. At the end of the film, being torn between her desire to dance and her loss of her husband, Vicky falls out of the balcony and asks Julian, her husband to remove her red shoes like in the Ballet before her death.

Atwood expressed her disapproval of the cinematic version of the fairy tale showing that it was teaching a whole generation of girls a negative message, a message of surrender and repression. In “The Curse of Eve-Or, What I learned in School,” Atwood criticises the stereotyping of women in mythic and literary tradition that is completely phallogentric. She writes on the film,

Then there was *The Red Shoes* - not the Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale but the movie, starring Moira Shearer, with beautiful red hair. A whole generation of little girls was taken to see it as a special treat for their birthday parties. The

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message was clear. You could not have both your artistic career and the love of a good man as well, and if you tried, you would end up committing suicide.
(32)

In *Lady Oracle*, Atwood makes writing the equivalent of dancing. They are both presented as expressions of the female body in a way that is denied to a woman by society. It is clear in the novel that Joan felt ashamed to tell her husband that she writes gothic romances, a feeling that she clearly linked to her shame of being fat in the past as if they are both sins that degrade her in his view. "I would then confess mine..." (197). Indeed, Joan faked an identity that suits Arthur's aspirations and demands about the woman he desires to get married to and live with only to gain his love. Although, she needed to tell him, she kept her past and several identities secret comparing them to "layers"(198) when he discovered that she was living with another man before their marriage. She kept secret the fact that she was a writer of gothic romances using the name of Louisa K. Delacourt and played the role of the good wife who tried to keep Arthur's love.

Joan was conscious about the consequences of female pride and vanity in a misogynist society which regards female artistic creation as a risk to the set order. She compares herself to the actress in *The Red Shoes* thinking that keeping her career secret allowed her to satisfy her husband but to a certain degree. She reflects on her marriage thinking that "Then there was Moira Shearer, in *The Red Shoes*. Neither of them had been able to please the handsome prince; both of them had died. I was doing fairly well by comparison. Their mistake had been to go public, whereas I did my dancing behind closed doors. It was safer, but..." (216). The last word is ironic because it gives the reader a hint that keeping both, the dance and the man is not possible. Wilson contends that "Atwood's female characters in *Lady Oracle* and other

works face the double and potentially triple bind of Moira Shearer's role in the film, *The Red Shoes*, loosely based on the Andersen fairy tale: they can 'dance' (be artists, be 'themselves,' be 'free') or marry (be conventional, be-for-others, conform to societal rules), but they cannot do both" (121).

Dance is an important motif which is closely linked to self-expression and especially to feminine expression in *Lady Oracle*. Actual dancing as a ballerina was not allowed to the protagonist because of her shape as a fat child, a traumatic experience that contributed to her low self-esteem and feelings of shame of her body. Instead of dancing with the girls as butterfly, her mother advised the teacher to give Joan the costume of a mothball with strange dance steps. A dance that made her quit the dancing class despite her love for it and consider it as a humiliation:

I threw myself into the part, it was a dance of rage and destruction, tears rolled down my cheeks behind the fur, the butterflies would die; my feet hurt for days afterwards. "This isn't me," I kept saying to myself, "they're making me do it"; yet even I was concealed in the teddy-bear suit, which flopped about me and made me sweat, I felt naked and exposed, as if this ridiculous dance was the truth about me and everyone could see it. (50)

Later, in her moments of fear and stress, Joan has fantasies of a fat lady she saw at the circus when she was a child. Joan's identification with the fat lady is joined by the repressed desire to dance.

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In one of her fantasies she sees her dressed as a ballerina but performing a dangerous dance that may kill her, thus the reference to *The Red Shoes*, to the message that dance may lead to death is frequently presented in the novel in different forms including the fantasy:

In this one I was sitting in a circus tent...Suddenly, a spotlight cut through the blackness and focused on a tiny platform at the top of the tent. Upon it stood the Fat Lady from the freak show at the Canadian National Exhibition. She was even fatter than I had imagined her..., much fatter than me. She was wearing pink tights with spangles, a short fluffy pink skirt, satin ballet slippers and, on her head a sparkling tiara. She carried a diminutive pink umbrella; this was a substitute for the wings which I longed to pin on her. *Even in my fantasies I remained faithful to a few ground rules of reality.*(102)

The last sentence that I emphasised shows that Joan was conscious about her fears and the consequence of the experiences she lived on her self perception. In *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion*, Nathalie Cooke believes that “The Fat Lady who appears like a ghostly apparition throughout the novel is clearly a project of Joan’s psychic. She is the incarnation of Joan’s anxieties about her childhood and the excessiveness of her personality” (88).

When Joan tried automatic writing, she produced a book of poetry that exposed her relationship with her mother, despite the fact that everyone thought that it was about her relationship with her husband. The latter became suspicious of her artistic activity and withdrew to silence while she could not cope with sudden fame because she has never been under the spotlight since she was a child. However, this sudden attention from the public and the media made her misbehave in interviews, enter into a relationship with a performer called

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“The Royal Porcupine” and receive blackmails and threats to be exposed by Fraser Buchanan and threats of death and dead animals put on her doorsteps. In addition, Paul comes to pretend to rescue her from her marriage to Arthur, a sequence of events that made her risk exposing her different identities that she managed to keep secret and apart for a long time.

Joan’s publication of *Lady Oracle*, the collection of poems made her dance public. Consequently, she performed like the mothball in her childhood because she was not yet a butterfly; she needs more courage and time to reach such metamorphosis. The result was shame for misbehaviour in public, loss of Arthur’s appreciation and risk of death. Atwood parodies *The Red Shoes* resolution when the actress commits suicide under the influence of the shoes for Joan comes up with a solution which is faked drowning or pretended suicide with the help of her two friends Marlene and Sam. *Lady Oracle*, the author who received the name of her book dies because her dance in public made her loose “the love of a good man”.

Joan’s last dance in Italy is significant because after her escape and decision to stop being “an escape artist”, Joan decides to dance for herself, a hint that she has chosen to devote herself to her art, but in a ritual like dance, she dances on glass and hurts her feet that become red with blood like the Red Shoes that hurt the feet of Karen in the tale:

From now on, I thought, I would dance for no one but myself...I raised myself into bare toes and twirled around...I closed my eyes. Wings grew from my shoulders...I’d danced through the broken glass, in my bare feet too. Some butterfly. I limped into the main room, trailing bloody footprints...The real red shoes, the feet punished for dancing. You could dance or you could have the love of a good man...Finally, you overcame your fear and danced, and they cut

your feet off. The good man went away too, because you wanted to dance.
(335)

Atwood presents the image that the female body has to suffer if she decides to overcome the prescribed image given to her by patriarchy. Wilson comments on the intertext's message when writing, "As in Atwood's other fairy-tale intertexts, the main image in both Andersen and Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* is female amputation. As we have begun to see, Atwood's women symbolically lose their eyes, tongues, heads or hearts, and bodies, breasts, hands, or feet ... in phallogentric culture" (122). In fact, the last image of Joan dancing on broken glass is a hint to another tale which is *The Little Mermaid*.

4.2.1.2. *The Little Mermaid*:

It is another fairy tale by Hans Christian Anderson that was published in 1837. It tells the story of an underwater kingdom of mermaids. When the little mermaids grow they are allowed to swim to the surface one a year and they see the world on earth. When the daughter of the sea king swam to the surface, she watched a handsome prince's celebration of his birthday on a boat and could not resist falling in love with that prince. A storm caused the boat to sink and the little mermaid saved the prince from death putting him near a temple. A young woman found him unconscious and he never knew that it was the mermaid who saved him.

The little mermaid decides to have legs and a human soul to live with the prince and buys a potion from a witch in the sea who tells her that she will dance better than any human but she will suffer pain like dancing on knives and that she will not have a soul unless the prince loves and marries her but she will lose her tongue and voice. If he does not, she will die. When she took the potion and the prince found her, she became his companion, but when

his parents arranged a marriage between him and a neighbouring princess, he finds that the princess is the girl who found him near the temple. Thinking that she is the one who saved him, he married her and the mermaid's sacrifices went in vain. Her sisters exchanged their hair for a knife they gave her to kill the prince and spill his blood on her feet to regain her shape as a mermaid, but she refused and her body dissolved into foam then she was transformed into a daughter of the air and she would gain a soul after 300 years of good deeds for mankind.

The Little Mermaid tale appears as an intertextual reference in chapter twenty one when Joan was thinking about her marriage and realised that though she understood Arthur, did not demand of him much as her friends wanted their husbands to do and kept her career as a writer of gothic romances secret from him, still "something was missing" (216).

As a woman writer, Joan is aware of the sacrifices she has to make to satisfy society and her husband. She thinks " And yet, as time went by, I began to feel something was missing. Perhaps, I thought, I had no soul; I just drifted around, singing vaguely, like the Little Mermaid in the Anderson fairy tale. In order to get a soul you had to suffer, you had to give something up...Neither of them had been able to please the handsome prince; both of them had died." (216). Joan compared herself to the little mermaid, thinking that her refusal to suffer and give up her art is the reason behind her feelings. She thinks that she was not given a soul because she did not sacrifice her tongue and "drifted around singing vaguely" (216).

4.2.1.3. “The Lady of Shalott” by Alfred Lord Tennyson:

Being a writer, Atwood’s protagonist Joan refers to Alfred Lord Tennyson’s famous poem of 1833, entitled “The Lady of Shalott”. The poem is one of the romantic masterpieces that attracted attention and inspired other works in the arts including painting. It tells the story of a lady who was living in a tower and weaving images reflected in a mirror hanging in her loom. She was not allowed to stop weaving or look at the world directly and if she dears do, a curse will fall on her. One day she saw the reflection of Sir Lancelot and turned to look at the real world, consequently, the cloth she was weaving flew outside and the mirror breaks. She went out of her tower taking a boat on which she wrote her name and lied in the boat floating down the river to the city where people found her dead body.

Atwood alludes to the poem in the novel in several contexts. We have previously seen that most of her allusions to mythical intertexts related to women images are put in parallel with her protagonists development either to expose the conditions they are put in, their psychological development and in *Lady Oracle* in particular the meaning of the same intertext differs from one context in the novel to another because they seem to be connected in a web to reach a final message conveyed to the reader. First, Atwood criticises the representation of the female body as a revered object for its romanticised beauty when Joan was a young girl she had the romantic perception of beauty developed by patriarchal society, “I was a romantic despite myself, and I really wanted, then, to have someone, anyone, say that I had a lovely face, even if I had to turn into a corpse in a barge-bottom first” (143).

When Joan left to London and started writing, she still had a romantic vision: “I wanted castles and princesses, the Lady of Shalott floating down a winding river in a boat”

(143) but she discovered that reality was different: “instead of the castles and ladies, though, there was a lot of traffic and a large number of squat people with bad teeth”(143); However, when Joan tried later automatic writing, the figure of the Lady of Shalott appeared in her poetry but Joan could not understand her own poetry and to whom the woman refers in the poem:

Who is the one standing in the prow

Who is the one voyaging

under the sky's arch, under the earth's arch

under the arch of arrows

in the death boat, why does she sing

At that stage of Joan's development, the Lady of Shalott was associated with Joan as a female artist whose confrontation with the real world led to her staged suicide from a boat in the lack of Ontario and gave her the image of “a death cult”(313). Joan refers to the poem:

I'd been shoved into the ranks of those other unhappy ladies, scores of them apparently, who'd been killed by a surfeit of words. There I was, on the bottom of the death barge where I'd once longed to be, my name on the prow, winding my way down the river. Several of the articles drew morals: you could sing and dance or you could be happy, but not both. May be they were right, you could stay in the tower for years, weaving away, looking in the mirror, but one glance out the window at real life and that was that. The curse, the doom. I began to

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feel that even though I hadn't committed suicide, perhaps I should have. They made it sound so plausible. (313)

Andrea Stolz summarises Staels's analysis writing that "Joan's continuing imitation of the Lady comments on her desire to reiterate the traditional role designed for women [in Victorian times], a role embodied both in nineteenth-century 'high' literature and twentieth-century popular romances"(84).

The last context of *The Lady of Shalott* as an intertext is quite different because when Joan reached her moment of metamorphosis and understood her obsession with her mother, she understood that the woman in her poetry is her mother whom she must liberate in order to be free. She understood that her mother was the one she saw in the mirror, the one who dictated the words, and the one she always wanted to satisfy but could not.

She'd come very close that time, she'd almost done it. She She'd never really let go of me because I had never let her go. It had been she standing behind me in the mirror, she was the one who was waiting around each turn, her voice whispered the words. She had been the lady in the boat, the death barge, the tragic lady with flowing hair and stricken eyes, the lady in the tower. She couldn't stand the view from the window, life was her curse...She needed her freedom also; she had been my reflection too long. (330)

Both Joan and her mother are victims: her mother is the victim of her marriage and society that deprived her of having her own success while Joan is the victim of her mother and her obesity that strengthened her feelings of inferiority. Susan Maclean contends that "Joan and her mother are mirror images of each other, both are modern ladies of Shalott. Whereas

Joan's mother is a prisoner of reality, Joan is a prisoner of fantasy" (185). At the end of the novel, Joan understood that keeps seeing her mother because she "would never be able to make her happy" and decided to "set her free" (330).

4.2.1.4. *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy:

According to Andrea Strolz, there is an intertextual relationship between *Lady Oracle* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* concerning their female protagonists (79). In *Lady Oracle*, Joan wanted to get married to someone who knows everything about her and loves her, but she could not tell her husband about several details in her past that were not her fault including her mother, her obesity, and her writing career: "I longed to marry Arthur, but I couldn't do it unless he knew the truth about me and accepted me as I was, past and present" (197). However, she thought if he knew, "he would be horrified, he would find me unethical, he would be disgusted, he would leave" (198). Similarly, Tess in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* lost her husband when she told him of her past as a victim of rape and abortion and lived with the desire to be accepted by him but she ended up by being executed for murder.

4.2.1.5. *The Bluebeard*:

Bluebeard is a French tale that was written by Charles Perrault and published in 1697. It appeared later among the collected fairy tales by the brothers Grimm in *Grimm's Fairy Tales* in 1812. Atwood makes several references to *Grimm's Fairy tales* in her writings including critical and fictional ones. She even wrote in 1983 a collection of short stories entitled *Bluebeard's Egg* containing a short story with the same title.. In *Lady Oracle*, *The Tale* appears as an intertext on two levels. First, Joan compares herself to the wives of

Bluebeard except the last one who was saved from death. Second, the image of the husband killing his wives appears at the end of the Gothic romance *Stalked by Love* that Joan was writing.

When Charlotte enters the Maze, she finds at the centre four women: the Fat Lady and two women with red hair and green eyes (they are symbolic of Joan's multiple identities) and Felicia, the wife of Redmond. At that moment, the resolution of the gothic romance becomes fused with that of the novel *Lady Oracle* because Charlotte goes out of the maze to see Redmond who turns to become Arthur and asks her to go out but as, bluebeard, she knew that he killed his previous wives and refuses to go with him; so he becomes a skull trying to kill her. The intertext here shows that patriarchal marriage is linked to death and despite the difference in the character of the wife; she will be the victim at the end.

4.2.1.5. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

The intertextual relationship between *Lady Oracle* and *Romeo and Juliet* is not direct and easily deduced by the reader because unlike the previously mentioned works, there is no textual reference to the play except an image that alludes to the work without mentioning it like previous works. Joan's reference to Shakespeare's play is to Act 2 Scene 2, in particular, which is the balcony scene, one of the famous romantic scenes in the play. When Joan left to Italy after her staged suicide, she went to Terremoto where she went the previous year with Arthur. She was standing on the balcony, thinking:

I'd always been fond of balconies. I felt that if I could only manage to stand on one long enough, the right one, wearing a long white trailing gown, preferably during the first quarter of the moon, something would happen: music would

sound, a shape would appear below, sinuous and dark, and climb towards me, while I leaned fearfully, hopefully, gracefully, against the wrought-iron railing and quivered. (7-8)

Being a romantic person, Joan remembers her desire to have a lover standing under her balcony and climbing to her, however, she realises that such wish will never become true and started wishing that Arthur would come to her and developing nostalgic feelings towards the things she left home.

4.2.2. Quotations: Texts from Various Sources:

Atwood quotes passages from different sources but without using the quotation marks.

4.2.2.1. Poetry:

4.2.2.1.1. “Brownie Rhyme”:

An extract from a Brownie rhyme that Joan used to sing with other girls in the Brownies is included in the novel and Joan comments on its two last lines describing how she was not successful at pleasing her mother by helping her at home. Her mother was not patient and did not allow her to make childish mistakes. It is clear since the beginning of the novel that Joan's mother was difficult and harsh.

A Brownie gives in to the *older folk*;

A Bownie does NOT give in to herself!

Here you see the laughing Gnomes,

Helping mothers in our homes.

4.2.2.1.2. “Say Not the Struggle Naught Avaieth”

On page 107, there are few lines of Arthur Hugh Clough’s poem “Say Not the Struggle Naught Avaieth” about hope that Joan learned when she was young with the Spiritualists.

4.2.2.1.3. *Lady Oracle*:

Various passages of Joan’s poetry that was published in her book *Lady Oracle* appear in different pages such as 221, 222, and 226.

b- Newspapers extracts:

On page 14, there are extracts from two Canadian newspapers, *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*, which wrote about Joan after the publication of her book of poetry *Lady Oracle*. However, the quotes included show Atwood’s desire to expose male-dominated criticism of female artists. Based on Atwood’s personal experience, the physical appearance of the woman writer was more important than her production; her hair occupied significant parts in literary criticism as “every newspaper clipping, friendly or hostile, had mentioned it, in fact a lot of space had been devoted to it: hair in the female was regarded as more important than either talent or lack of it” (14).

On page 234, an article’s title “UNKNOWN BURSTS ON LITERARY SCENE LIKE COMET” appears in *Toronto Star* as an example of the criticism devoted to her poetry. *The Globe* is quoted on the same page as it describes her poetry as “gnomic,” and “chthonic”. Other titles of articles appear on page 250 but without the reference where they were published.

On page 266, there is an extract from a newspaper: *The Star*, about an explosion caused by the Royal Porcupine.

4.2.2.3. Correspondence:

On page 174, there is a telegram sent to Joan by her father informing her of the death of her mother.

On page 25, there is a coded short letter written on a postcard that Joan sent to her friends who helped her pretend to commit suicide and escape to Italy.

On page 224, there is a response letter from the house of edition Black Widow Press that informs Joan that they cannot publish her poetry and advises her to contact Morton and Sturgess, the publishers that will make her famous.

On page 337, there is a letter sent by Sam to inform Joan that he and Marlene were suspected of her death and they were in jail.

4.2.2.4. Books:

4.2.2.4.1. *Roget's Thesaurus*:

An extract from the dictionary explaining the word Bow that Joan wrote in her first experiment of automatic writing is included in the novel on page 220.

4.2.2.4.2. *The Black Book*:

Fraser Buchanan used to write secret details in a book he named the Black Book to use it to blackmail famous writers including Joan who managed to steal it from him when he

started blackmailing her. A picture from the book appears on page 290 including all the secrets he managed to know about Joan's life organised by date.

The intertextual relations in *Lady Oracle* differ in degree, some works appear explicitly either by mentioning their titles or characters and others have an implicit relation that can be deduced by the reader.

4.3. *The Handmaid's Tale*:

Atwood's dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale* is a futuristic image of the American growing religious, feminist and ecological extremist orientations. It was written in 1985 to envision the logical consequences of the existent trends. In addition to its criticism of religious conservatism, environmental pollution and American consumerism, *The Handmaid's Tale* presents the unexpected results of the feminist movement demands.

Indeed, the novel's nature as a warning against ideological practices that influence the public and the personal sides of human life makes it rich with references to politics, religion, history, literature and popular culture. In *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, Coral Ann Howells contends that, "The Handmaid's Tale, centered on human rights abuses and particularly the oppression of women under a fundamentalist regime, is entirely social and political in its agenda"(163). Many of the novel's ideological or political, as Atwood prefers to term, concerns are highlighted through intertextuality.

4.3.1. Allusions:

4.3.1.1. *The Bible*:

The novel contains a great number of biblical intertexts as it is a futuristic image of life under a theocratic rule and it exposes how the authority manipulates religious words and references to control people and entrap them in a prison-like environment that situates everyone in a role of servitude to the system. In the name of religion and necessity, everyone is denied many of his rights beginning from the commanders at the top of the system to their wives to the handmaids and the Angels. Many words, ideas, naming and practices are taken directly from *The Bible*.

4.3.1.2. Names:

It is important to note that names in the novel are rarely used for their literal meanings; instead, they are either used for metaphoric purposes or euphemism.

-Gilead:

The novel's setting is called The Republic of Gilead which comes from the Bible. Gilead refers in the Bible to an Israelite land between Jordan and the Dead Sea in the time of Old Testament. It was a fruitful productive land. The use of the name is metaphoric for the authority hopes to construct a land like Gilead after the disastrous results of pollution and misuse of science including infertility. The names of the shops are also taken from the Bible such as Milk and Honey, Lilies of the Field Loaves and Fishes and All Flesh in addition to technological devices like Whirlwind for car.

-Handmaid:

The novel's protagonist and narrator is a Handmaid. The latter is used to denote a category of women who are productive and chosen as servants or maids to bear the children of the commanders. The source of the name comes from Genesis 30:3-1 which describes how Rachel asked Jacob to take her maiden to give him children. However, Atwood shows how many of the religious incidents and rules are blindly followed or taken as excuse for enslaving other people because the way the authority in Gilead took inspiration from the incident is quite striking. The Biblical passage says: "When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister, and she said to Jacob. Give me children or I shall die!...Then she said Here is my maid Bilhah; go into her, that she may bear upon my knees, and even I may have children through her"(Genesis 30: 1-3). Applying the passage literally, Gilead created a new kind of relationships that made the three involved in procreation: the commander, his wife and her handmaid in a performance that seemed like religious ceremony while each one of them has been convinced that it is his religious duty to guarantee the continuity of human mankind. In her article, "Margaret Atwood's Modest Proposal: *The Handmaid's Tale*," Karen Stein contends that:

Recontextualizing this passage, Gilead turns Rachel's anguished plea for children into the pretext for instituting a new domesticity based on the sexual triangle of a man and two women. In the guise of a re-population program, Gilead reads the biblical text literally and makes it the basis for the state sanctioned rape, the impregnation ceremony the handmaids must undergo each month. In this recasting of the biblical passage, Gilead obliterates the

emotional meaning of the story and, instead, turns a woman's desire into an instrument of male control. (131)

The system in Gilead made human procreation more important than humanity itself because they applied the words literally forbidding couples of having any human affections and treating maids as bearing machines that must undergo repetitive rape-like ceremonies that were not physically, but psychologically harmful and degrading.

-Jezebel's:

Jezebel is the name of a brothel secretly created for officers. When some women are punished like Moira, if they are not sent to clean toxic waste in the colonies, they are sent to Jezebel to serve as prostitutes. As mentioned in the Bible, Jezebel refers to a Phoenician princess who married Ahab, king of ancient Israel and she is associated with seduction. According to Stanley Arthur Cook, Jezebel became associated with fallen and abandoned women in the twentieth century. (411). The existence of such a place under the theocratic system of Gilead is ironic because it sets a clear example of the double standards that exist in relation to gender issues. Although, the authority claims to base all its practices on Christian doctrines, it creates a place that is devoted to sinful practices but its hypocritical, misogynist interpretation and practice of religion leads to condemning women whose objectification is driven to the extreme.

Atwood exposes how power is possessed only by male members of society because they created categories for women to serve their survival measures without taking into consideration their humanity. The only category that possessed a limited power was that of the Aunts, but it was a kind of supervision and indoctrination of the handmaid's in a way that resembles brain washing. The choice of the name Jezebel is significant because it gives a hint

to fallen women not men. While the officers and commanders were free to go to Jezebel, the girls who served there were the punished ones including the lesbian Moira who tried to escape from her role as a handmaid. Under the Gileadean regime, women were sexually objectified, confined to gender roles designed according to their age and fertility and denied access to all forms of literacy which was considered, ironically, as a sin.

4.3.1.3. Names appropriated to the context:

-The ceremony:

The ceremony is a rape-like practice developed by the system as a survival measure to face infertility and birth decrease. Its inspiration comes from the Bible, but its practice is a kind of ritual that starts with the commander reading the passage quoted in the novel's epigraph about Jacob, his wife and their maid. Then, the three are in clothes and the handmaid, with closed eyes, is positioned between the legs and hands of the commander's wife and the commander tries to impregnate her in a mechanical way without any intimacy because the ceremony is regarded as a religious duty for the three of them. Although, physical violence is absent, psychological torture and degradation characterise such practice because it creates a strange relationship between the three: the commander is prevented from having any pleasure because there is no intimacy and kissing is forbidden under the new regime. The wife becomes jealous and hurt because she is devalorised as a woman since the law states that "there are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren"(53); another misogynist blame for infertility that women were not responsible for. For the handmaid, she becomes treated as an object or "two-legged womb". The totalitarian regime succeeded at dehumanising the relationships between the citizens of Gilead for each one is supposed to fulfil a gender role designed to guarantee the continuity of the regime and women are given

roles that make it impossible for them to develop relationships of solidarity or friendship beyond the category they belong to. Everyone is threatened by the law and any simple act like reading, talking or seeing can lead to death.

-Testifying:

Originally, it is a practice by fundamentalist Christians who tell how they gave up their sins and converted to Christian belief. It is mentioned in several parts of the Bible including the following two examples:

Psalm 66:16: “Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul”.

Psalm 40:9-10: “I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation”(www.openbible.info).

However, Testimony is used in the novel in the chapter V, Nap: to refer to the handmaids' confessions of their past sexual experiences that were considered as their own sins regardless of their responsibility on the so called sins. For example, Moira testified how she had suffered from gang rape and had an abortion and the Aunts convinced her that it was her fault. Again any blame in the new theocratic system is on women, another gender discrimination supported by misuses of the Bible.

-Salvagings:

Another word that appears in the novel but again modified to suit the Gileadean system's goal of enforcing their policy of control, fear and executive punishment. While in the Bible it is used to mean salvation, in the Gileadean regime, it is used as a euphemism for

capital punishments and executions. For example, when the handmaids went shopping they saw six hanging bodies of executed doctors who used to do abortions before the establishment of Gilead. They are killed for a crime that was not considered one at that time.

Beside the main gateway there are six more bodies hanging, by the necks, their hands tied in front of them, their heads in white bags tipped sideways onto their shoulders. There must have been a Men's Salvaging early this morning. I didn't hear the bells. Perhaps I've become used to them.... These men, we've been told, are like war criminals. It's no excuse that what they did was legal at the time: their crimes are retroactive. They have committed atrocities and must be made into examples, for the rest. Though this is hardly needed. No woman in her right mind, these days, would seek to prevent a birth, should she be so lucky as to conceive. (30)

In fact, all the biblical intertexts used in *The Handmaid's Tale* expose the manipulation of the biblical text by the system in Gilead to justify their practices and crimes against humanity. In Karen Stein's words, "the totalitarian government of Gilead appropriates biblical texts to institute and enforce harsh political control, to shape a political reality for its citizens" (131). Moreover, the interpretation of the text has become misogynist in nature because the blame for anything goes to women rather than men while the Bible itself was locked and only males were allowed to read it in their households.

4.3.1.2. Literature:

4.3.1.2.1. Jonathan Swift's "A modest Proposal":

A quote from Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" appears among two other epigraphs before the narrative. It has been discussed in details in the previous chapter that

analysed the paratext, however we can add that the use of such quote situates the text within satire and prepares the reader for an ironic mode of presentation. According to Karen Stein: “Atwood’s choice of an epigraph from ‘A Modest Proposal’ invites us to explore thematic and stylistic parallels between her text and Swift’s, and leads us to posit ironic readings of the narrative voices. The satire in each case depends upon an ironic narration, the ‘proposal’ or ‘tale’ of a supposedly artless observer who reports an appalling situation in a relatively flat style”(132).

In addition, Atwood’s use of Swift’s passage calls the reader’s attention to the political aspects of her novel for it foreshadows a satirical tale of suffering, survival, and discrimination under governmental control. In Stein’s words,

Swift, the brilliant Irish political satirist and clergyman, published his “Modest Proposal” in 1729 to expose the damaging consequences of British economic policy toward Ireland. Atwood, the brilliant Canadian novelist, published her *Handmaid’s Tale* in 1985 to expose the damaging consequences of patriarchal misogyny in an imagined state, which Atwood alleges is not entirely fictional. (132)

Positing Swift’s intertext as an epigraph strengthens its influence on the readers who anticipate the fact that Atwood’s novel is critical and serious in tone.

4.3.1.2.2. Clement Clarke Moore’s “A Visit from St. Nicholas”:

In the chapter entitled Household, the seventh section, Offred stands near the window repeating a line from Clement Moore’s famous poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” that was published in 1823. The poem speaks about a visit of Santa Claus and the gifts he brought for children at Christmas and the line that says “The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow”

is repeated by Offred while she stands at night to look at the moon. In this chapter, Offred compares herself to a child twice: when the commander started reading the Bible for the household and when she wanted to see the moon, however, the child's innocence is lost in the harsh reality of the life she is forced to live. There is only a weak glimpse of hope that remains in her remembrances of her lost husband and daughter whose fate she never knows. The poem is put into parallel with the preceding image that Offred uses after looking at the moon, for she is no longer able to see things in the romantic way she used to do: "The moon is a stone and the sky is full of deadly hardware, but oh God, how beautiful anyway" (86).

4.3.1.2.3. George Orwell's *The Shape of Things to come*:

In chapter eight when Offred is walking across the commander's wife who is working in her garden, she looks at her and thinks about her past and her present status in the newly established society. She remembers how she used to give speeches about the real role of women and how they must return to their traditional roles in the family, however, when it has become realised by the regime, it turned to be different from theory. She notices that she is silent all the time and her traits are different when she faced reality. Offred uses the sentence "Something like this must have happened to her, once she saw the true shape of things to come" (39), an allusion to George Orwell's science fiction novel *The Shape of Things to Come* that was published in 1933.

However, Offred uses the word "true" to make a parallel between the outcome of Gileadean regime and the utopia predicted in Orwell's novel. While Orwell predicted in his novel a second world war, an abolition of all religions and an establishment of a world state in a utopia, the result of the victory in war brought a dictatorship, religious extremism, and a life like hell either for women who are barren like Serena Joy or fruitful like Offred.

4.3.1.2.4. Shakespeare's *King Lear*:

Offred thinks about the commander's demand to play scrabble with him and give him a kiss as something strange, but remembering the circumstances, she thinks "context is all"(172) which is an allusion to Shakespeare's *King Lear*: "Ripeness is all" (V, ii, 9) because the things that were normal in the past became censored and outlawed under the Gileadean regime.

4.3.1.2.5. Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*:

In chapter 29, Offred mentions that she was reading Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*, a title which evokes everyone's situation under the regime of Gilead. Offred is able to read only during the commander's meetings and tries to read the maximum because she knows that reading was censored.

4.3.1.2.6. Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Maud":

Offred gets the habit of watching Serena Joy working in her garden and contemplating the beauty of the flowers and even associating them with human experience. However, the only escape of beauty available to Offred seems to her like a place of buried and silenced things. In chapter 25, Offred compares Serena's garden to the one mentioned in Lord Alfred Tennyson's 1855 famous poem "Maud":

There is something subversive about this garden of Serena's, a sense of buried things bursting upwards, wordlessly, into the light, as if to point, to say: Whatever is silenced will clamor to be heard, though silently. A Tennyson garden, heavy with scent, languid; the return of the word swoon. Light pours down upon it from the sun, true, but also heat rises, from the flowers

themselves, you can feel it: like holding your hand an inch above an arm, a shoulder. It breathes, in the warmth, breathing itself in.(132)

Atwood's allusion to Tennyson's poem evokes a mode of mourning for Offred feels an intersection of life and death in that garden, like the state of the family members she lost and she is not able to mourn them because she does not believe in their loss. Significantly, the garden does evoke in Offred a sense of hope and expression in the silenced life the Gileadeans are living.

4.3.1.3. Theories:

4.3.1.3.1. Sigmund Freud's "Penis Envy":

In her visit to the commander, Offred asks him about the meaning of a sentence in Latin, he hands her his pen to write it and holding the pen made her feel a certain power and remember Aunt Lydia warning women that "pen is envy"(168). The sentence is a transformation of Freud's psychiatric theory of "penis envy" which argues that at certain stages of development girls envy boys for their possession of penis, however, it is used by Atwood here to symbolise women's dispossession of power and knowledge and Offred's envy of the commander's possession of knowledge, freedom and language symbolised by his pen.

4.3.1.3.2. Descartes Philosophy:

As a narrator, Offred has decided to defeat her silenced life under the regime and tell her story using the materials available. She has no access to writing, so she chooses to record her story on tapes. As a narrator, she makes allusion to the French philosopher Descartes's theory "I think therefore I am" in her own view that the act of telling her story will make her voice heard and there will be a listener: "I tell therefore you are"(239).

4.3.1.3.3. Karl Marx's The Communist Manifesto:

There is an allusion to Marx's famous communist slogan "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" that appeared in 1875 in [*Critique of the Gotha Program*](#) to promote free accessibility to services and goods. Ironically, the system of Gilead uses the slogan in a modified version "from each according to her ability, to each according to his needs" to promote their discrimination in matters of gender roles and ensure the enslavement of women in the name of religion and necessity.

4.3.1.4. Fairy Tales:

4.3.1.4.1. *The Little Red Riding Hood*:

Atwood's allusion to the fairy tale *The Little Red Riding Hood* appears at the beginning of the novel through the use of the costumes and the setting and continues throughout the whole novel. First of all, the image of Offred in red and carrying a basket while going to do shopping in Lilies of the field reminds the reader of the fairy tale character. To assure the use of *The Little Red Riding Hood* as an intertext in *The Handmaid's Tale* Atwood asks the question "What do you think of when you see someone in red carrying a basket" (Sharon Rose Wilson 271).

However, Atwood presents the little red riding hood as already eaten by the wolf; she is already in the house of the commander, she has lost her mother and daughter and has little hope of being rescued. Offred herself compares her reflection in the mirror to the little red riding hood when she thinks:

There remains a mirror, on the hall wall. If I turn my head so that the white wings framing my face direct my vision towards it, I can see it as I go down the stairs, round, convex, a pier glass, like the eye of a fish, and myself in it like a

distorted shadow, a parody of something, some fairy-tale figure in a red cloak, descending towards a moment of carelessness that is the same as danger. (18)

Offred's costume suggests a parallel with the little red riding hood, her behaviour with the commander including the secret meetings and the play of scrabble suggests a parallel with the fairy tale character going out of her path while the house of the commander as a setting is compared to the forest. According to Wilson,

Offred is a grown up but naive Red Cap, whose conditioning endorses contentment in the wolf's embrace. Her ironic "innocence" or naiveté is, like the initial blindness of Atwood's other narrators, partially willed. In the world of the fairy tale, innocence or ignorance is equivalent to evil: failure to know what the wolf is brings the same disaster as choosing the wolf. Having gone with her society through the looking glass, Atwood's Red Cap is now trapped in a mirror.(279)

But at the end of the novel, Offred or Red Cape is rescued by another good male character and goes out of the forest to tell her own tale.

4.3.1.4.2. *The Red Shoes:*

It appears as an intertext in different works by Atwood including fictional and poetic ones. In *The Handmaid's Tale* all the handmaids wear red shoes as part of their red costume but Offred mentions at the beginning of the novel that the shoes are not for dancing: "I get up out of the chair, advance my feet into the sunlight, in their red shoes, flat-heeled to save the spine and not for dancing" (5) giving a hint to the fatal end that dancing in red shoes brought for women. It foreshadows the submissiveness of the Handmaids and their lack of any reaction to reassure their identities that are erased by the regime of Gilead in addition to their

attempt to survive under patriarchy because dancing is symbolic of self assertion which leads literally under the new dictatorship to death. Although Offred lost her husband and daughter, she does not resist, instead she surrenders to the dictations of her new gender role as a Handmaid and accepts to meet the commander secretly though if discovered she will be expelled to the colonies and above all, she obeys the commander's wife when she ordered her to enter into a relationship with Nick to become pregnant. Offred is aware of the consequences of dancing, or resistance, for she says "I don't want to be a dancer" (298).

4.3.2. Quotations:

4.3.2.1. The Epigraphs:

The three quotes that appear as epigraphs to the narrative are explained in details in the third chapter because they are considered part of the paratext rather than the text.

4.3.2.2. The Bible:

There are many quotes taken from the Bible to be used in the indoctrination of the Handmaids or to enforce the law. Some of them are only scriptural precedents like giving the wives of the commanders the right to hit the Handmaids.

4.3.2.3. Other texts:

4.3.2.3.1. Hymns:

-“Amazing grace”:

A popular protestant hymn

-“Come to the Church in the Wildwood”:

It is a gospel hymn.

-“Whispering Hope”:

A hymn related to the Handmaids which gives them hope to survive only by giving birth to children.

4.3.2.3.2. Slogans:

-Nolite te bastardes carborundorum :

It is a statement in Latin that Offred found curved on wood inside her closet. She comes to know that the Handmaid who came before her to the house of the commander and hanged herself wrote it. The sentence is originally a Latin aphorism that writes: **Non Illegitimi carborundum** which means in English “Don’t let the bastards grind you down”. When the commander explains its meaning to Offred, the latter takes it as a personal slogan from which she derives strength to remain sane under the new circumstances.

-Take Back the Night:

It is a slogan used by the feminist movement during the 1980’s that revolted against violence against women. A slogan that Offred remembered while she was thinking of her mother who advocated a women’s culture but the one Offred is living in is unbearable.

As a literary work, *The Handmaid's Tale* is rich with intertexts varying from religious to philosophical to literary texts and fairy tales. The intertextual relations are complex for some intertexts are physically present in the world of the novel such as prayers from the Bible and the ceremony of impregnation. Some intertexts undergo deliberate transformations to serve the regime ends like the laws and the names taken from the Bible while others offer a parallel of the character’s settings and development like the fairy tales.

4.4. *The Penelopiad*:

As a rewriting of Homer's *The Odyssey*, *The Penelopiad* was published in 2005 as a work by a woman writer and women narrators. *The Penelopiad* came as a subversion of a long standing male-centred masterpiece that influenced the western literary tradition for ages. The subversive nature appears on different levels including the choice of the title, the formal aspects of the novel, the narrative voices and the selection of the intertexts themselves. Atwood's use of intertexts is political for she presents two Homeric passages as the epigraphs and relies on Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths* to express some doubts about Homeric idealised image of the character of Penelope. In the case of *The Penelopiad*, we start with the discussion of quotations because they are presented by Atwood as reasons for writing the novel and writing it the way it is.

4.4.1. Quotations:

4.4.1.1. *The Odyssey*:

-Epigraph 1:

... Shrewd Odysseus! You are a fortunate man to have won a wife of such pre-eminent virtue! How faithful was your flawless Penelope, Icarius' daughter! How loyally she kept the memory of the husband of her youth! The glory of her virtue will not fade with the years, but the deathless gods themselves will make a beautiful song for mortal ears in honour of the constant Penelope.
(Homer Book 24. 191-194)

The first intertext is taken from *The Odyssey*, a speech of the ghost of Agamemnon in Hades who hears about Penelope's virtue and faithfulness to her husband for twenty years. He compares her behaviour to that of his wife Clytemnestra who conspired with her lover and

killed him. Agamemnon speech reveals the image constructed for Penelope by Homer for she became glorified for her waiting for her husband's return for twenty years. Homer romanticises Penelope's behaviour which is clear in Agamemnon's description of her as keeping "the memory of the husband of her youth"(191) and considering it as a glory that gods will write songs about.

Atwood uses Agamemnon's speech to expose how Homer's description is superficial and exemplifies the stereotyping of female images in literary tradition and mythology as well. Details of Penelope's suffering, feelings and resisting what she calls later "temptation"(Atwood 2) for a long time are not given except the story of knitting the shroud to postpone giving an answer to her suitors. In addition, using the intertext from *The Odyssey* as an epigraph to Atwood's text gives it a different function. Instead of evoking or offering a parallel image, the intertext redirects the reader's emphasis to one of the major myths in *The Odyssey* that will be challenged and questioned by Atwood in a subversive way especially when combined with other intertexts such as Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths* that offer the possibility of Penelope's unfaithfulness. Atwood has already put into question Penelope's mythic chastity in her poem "Circe: Mud Poems" that was published in 1976 as Circe warns Odysseus:

She's up to something, she's weaving

histories, they are never right,

she has to do them over,

she is weaving her version

(*Eating Fire* 173)

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In *The Penelopiad*, Atwood's questioning of Penelope's idealised image is less direct and it comes as part of an attempt to make some archetypal, often mythic, images of some characters including Penelope, Odysseus and Helen closer to reality and everyday life. In her article "Five Ways of Looking at The Penelopiad", Coral Ann Howells states:

Atwood is playing with two levels of myth here: the Homeric myth of 'faithful Penelope' and cultural myths about women as either submissive and domestic, or as duplicitous schemers and *femmes fatales*—and which is she? Atwood focuses on the contradictions posed by these gender stereotypes as she peers into the gaps in Homer's narrative ...[Penelope's] subversive narrative represents Atwood's dialogue with *The Odyssey*, as through the ironic mode mythic experience is drained of the supernatural. Odysseus's adventures with monsters and temptresses are reduced through popular rumour and gossip to the level of tall tales. (9)

Howells goes further to suggest that Atwood's "myth debunking" is a kind of "postmodern skepticism"(10) and gives the example of Odysseus last adventure showing how Atwood brought it closer to modern reality than legendary tales:

Odysseus was the guest of a goddess on an enchanted isle, said some; she'd turned his men into pigs—not a hard job in my view—but had turned them back into men because she'd fallen in love with him and was feeding him unheard-of delicacies prepared by her own immortal hands, and the two of them made love deliriously every night; no, said others, it was just an expensive whorehouse, and he was sponging off the Madam. (Atwood 83-4)

In addition to Atwood's use of irony in most of her descriptions especially the ones associated with the character of Odysseus, she employs a heterodiegetic narration of the events rather than the well-known monodiegetic narration used for the epic, combining the voice of Penelope with those of her hanged twelve maids to give the reader a multiplicity of visions and engage him in the process of searching for the truth.

-Epigraph2:

... he took a cable which had seen service on a blue-bowed ship, made one end fast to a high column in the portico, and threw the other over the round-house, high up, so that their feet would not touch the ground. As when long-winged thrushes or doves get entangled in a snare ... so the women's heads were held fast in a row, with nooses round their necks, to bring them to the most pitiable end. For a little while their feet twitched, but not for very long. (Homer Book 22. 470-473)

The second epigraph is also taken from *The Odyssey* to describe the hanging of Penelope's twelve maids by her son Telemachus after they had been condemned by his father Odysseus. They were considered traitorous because they used to spy on the suitors who came to the castle asking for the hand of Penelope in an attempt to rule Ithaca. Atwood's inclusion of the hanging scene as one of the novel's epigraphs and giving the narrative voice to the twelve maids suggest that she wants to expose something that *The Odyssey* is silent about.

In *The Penelopiad*, the twelve ghosts haunt Odysseus in Hades and tell their story of being victims enslaved, guided by his wife and then killed to clear her reputation. Atwood attracts the reader's attention to the issue of the maids' victimisation in the introduction and expresses her choice of heterodiegetic narration:

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I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and to the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus which focuses on two questions that must pose themselves after any close reading of *The Odyssey*: what led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to. The story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water; there are too many inconsistencies. I've always been haunted by the hanged maids; and, in *The Penelopiad*, so is Penelope herself (xv).

In *The Odyssey*, Penelope charges the maids of treacherous behaviour and tells Odysseus that they revealed her trick of knitting the shroud to the suitors, so she was obliged to finish it:

Three whole years

I deceived them blind, seduced them with this scheme. ...

Then, thanks to my maids – the shameless, reckless creatures –

The suitors caught me in the act, denounced me harshly.

So I finished it off. Against my will. They forced me. (Book 19. 169-175)

Based on Atwood's reading of *The Odyssey* and Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*, *The Penelopiad* presents the hanging of the maids as a conspiracy between the old nurse Eurycleia and Penelope to save the latter's reputation as virtuous:

Oh then, dear Nurse, it's really up to you

To save me, and Odysseus' honour too!

Because he sucked at your now-ancient bust,

You are the only one of us he'll trust.

Point out those maids as feckless and disloyal,

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Snatched by the suitors as unlawful spoil

Polluted, shameless, and not fit to be

The dotting slaves of such a Lord as he! (Atwood 150).

The previous lines are part of a drama by the maids entitled *The Perils of Penelope*, they play different roles including those of Penelope and the old nurse revealing the secret behind their execution in the conversation between the two women. On one side, Penelope mentions that she was not faithful to Odysseus and considers it as her right compared to his behaviour with women in his adventures:

And now, dear Nurse, the fat is in the fire

He'll chop me up for tending my desire!

While he was pleasuring every nymph and beauty,

Did he think I'd do nothing but my duty?

While every girl and goddess he was praising,

Did he assume I'd dry up like a raisin? (Atwood 149)

On the other hand, Eurycleia agrees to hide her secret and sacrifice the maids to keep them silent and keep Odysseus honour:

Only the twelve, my lady, who assisted,

Know that the Suitors you have not resisted.

They smuggled lovers in and out all night;

They drew the drapes, and then they held the light.

They're privy to your every lawless thrill

They must be silenced, or the beans they'll spill! (The Penelopiad 150)

While Penelope's narrative in the chapter entitled "Slandorous Gossip" denies the rumours concerning her unfaithfulness and guilt, the maid's voice in the chapter that proceeds, which is the drama they perform, confirms such rumours and provides the reader with details of the conspiracy.

The phenomenon of intertextuality is limited in *The Penelopiad* either in form or function because the novel is written to be a transformation of *The Odyssey* with which it has significant hypertextual relationships, so any reference to other texts would be disturbing and would take the work out of its historical, cultural and literary context.

4.5. Conclusion:

In fact, Atwood's use of intertextuality is political in the first hand. She has been concerned for a long time with the way women were portrayed by western ideology in literature and mythology, linking her intertexts to two major interests throughout her whole career notably power politics and gender politics.

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5.1. Introduction:

Experimenting with genres is one of Atwood's major characteristics as a writer, however, it is done to make her writing speak the political. Her three novels have hypertextual relations with other texts in the canon while they retain their specific traits as expressions of the female subjectivity.

5.2. Margaret Atwood as a Woman Writer:

As a woman writer, Atwood is far from extremes, the feminist or the romantic. Almost all her works including the critical, the poetic and the fictional centre on women experiences from mythology to the contemporary. She is an engaged writer who is devoted to the female cause in almost all her literary production; however, she is far from being a feminist writer for she has openly refused being linked to the movement when she wrote in "Negotiating with the Dead": "If you're a woman and a writer, does that combination of gender and vocation automatically make you a feminist, and what does that mean, exactly?" (106). In addition, she demonstrated in her treatment of women issues that a woman is not always the victim advocating her rights, she can be the oppressor herself. However, a great deal of critical production has taken the works of Atwood from a feminist perspective partly because they centre on the female subject. According to Heidi Slettedahl,

In numerous interviews, Atwood has reiterated her views that novels are not political tracts and that she is under no obligation to toe a party line – or to be a role model. She dislikes rigid ideology. She is also concerned that a strict allegiance to a cause will damage her writing. She is, she argues, not a propagandist but an observer; her work merely reflects the reality of an uneven

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distribution of power between men and women. She certainly writes against the grain, which is a key element of much feminist criticism that seeks to denaturalize the seemingly natural. She even explores the limits of feminism as a political force... As Atwood reveals, a women's culture does not necessarily mean that the culture will be better than what went before – separatism of any kind is suspect, and feminism itself requires careful surveillance, too. (23-24)

As a novelist, Atwood has been able to tackle a variety of issues related to women, but from a range of perspectives and in different literary forms that subvert fairy tales and mythic archetypes or question social and political tradition that govern the individual in general. She resists being aligned with any ideology and believes that fiction is to be a reflection of society with all its interrelated aspects rather than having an ideological stance. Pierre Macherey maintains in his famous book *A Theory of Literary Production* that "...a book never arrives unaccompanied: it is a figure against a background of other formations depending on them rather than contrasting with them" (53). His definition seems similar to Atwood's own idea of her task as a novelist when she writes: "I live in the society; I also put the society inside my books so that you get a box within a box effect" (cited in Kaminski 24). Nonetheless, she believes that novels, in particular, function as transformations of social images rather than mere reflections or realistic images and compares her work to a lens: "A lens isn't a mirror. A lens can be a magnifying or a focusing lens, but it doesn't merely give a reflection...I recognize my work more as a distillation or a focusing"(cited in Hammond 111).

Atwood's idea of fiction functioning as a lens rather than a mirror emphasizes the importance of the author because the literary work can become "a distillation or focusing lens"(111) due to the author's artistic sensitivity. In fact, Atwood's image is similar to Macherey's concept of the "broken mirror" which is introduced in *The Theory of Literary*

Production: “literature can be called a mirror: in displacing objects it retains their reflection. It projects its thin surface on to the world and history. It passes through them and breaks them. In its train arise the images” (135). Macherey believes that the mirror he is describing is broken, as literature, it does not reflect realistic mimetic images of the world, he explains,

The mirror extends the world: but it also seizes, inflates and tears that world. In the mirror, the object is both completed and broken: *dissecta membra*. If the mirror constructs, it is in an inversion of the movement of genesis: rather than spreading, it breaks. The images emerge from this laceration. Elucidated by these images, the world and its powers appear and disappear, disfigured at the very moment when they begin to take shape (134).

As a woman writer Atwood is a crafty novelist whose talent produces novels of interrelated personal and political issues that reflect the world’s complexity in a way that makes her fiction critical without being openly ideological.

5.3. Margaret Atwood as a Political Writer:

Generally, when Margaret Atwood is referred to as a political writer in literary criticism, she is not associated with the politics related to governments, ruling systems and political institutions. She has her own definition of politics that is closely associated with power relations that exist in society on all levels of human relationships. She published her collection of poetry in 1971 under the title “Power Politics”, a phrase that she read in a friend’s letter and a newspaper. Two years later, Atwood wrote “Notes on Power Politics” that contains her definition of power:

Power is our environment. We live surrounded by it: it pervades everything we are and do, invisible and soundless, like air . . . We would all like to have a

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private life that is sealed off from the public life and different from it, where there are no rulers and no ruled, no hierarchies, no politicians, only equals, free people. But because any culture is a closed system and our culture is one based and fed on power this is impossible, or at least very difficult . . . So many of the things we do in what we sadly think of as our personal lives are simply duplications of the external world of power games, power struggles.(7)

Atwood's general view of power relations make her see politics in matters of power exertion either in public life or personal relations. She has always been preoccupied by the function of power in life and who exerts power over whom, in addition to its functioning in relation to gender, sex, language and the body.

Thus, in our analysis of politics in Atwood's writing, we adopt her own definition of politics rather than using the term related to governmental practices and institutions. She maintains, in an interview with Jo Brans that:

Politics, for me, is everything that involves who gets to do what to whom . . . It's not just elections and what people say they are – little labels they put on themselves . . . Politics really has to do with how people order their societies, to whom power is ascribed, who is considered to have power. A lot of power is ascription. People have power because we think they have power, and that's all politics is. And politics also has to do with what kind of conversations you have with people, and what you feel free to say to someone, what you don't feel free to say. (149)

It is clear that Atwood's vision of politics is a broad one that encompasses all power relations in which there are always two sides the one who possesses power and the one upon which power is exerted.

Moreover, Atwood links politics to the freedom of expression and the possibility of communication or its absence in certain situations, a theme that reoccurs in most of her literary production for language and self-expression are seen in Atwood's view as means of exerting power, survival or surrender. When Atwood refers to the political function of fiction, she pronounces again her idea of power relations: "The writer functions in her society as a kind of soothsayer, a truth teller ... the novel is a moral instrument. *Moral* implies political ... By political I mean having to do with power: who's got it, who wants it, how it operates; in a word who's allowed to do what to whom, who gets away with it and how" (cited in Woodcock 29). Atwood's politics in her fiction are closely related to two major axes: gender and its relation to identity and the female body and second language and its use either in writing, telling one's story or communicating.

5.4. Recurrent Political Concerns in Atwood's *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Penelopiad*:

5.4.1. Gender Politics:

Gender has always been discussed in the area of feminism and regarded as one of the major issues on which several theories were written. Feminists' interest in gender and its construction as a social product centred on the idea that "Woman" is victimised in the patriarchal society and constrained to predetermined codes or archetypes of femininity. As a generalised class women taking sometimes the capital letter as "Woman" become a major concern of theoretical framework in feminism, in Judith Butler words: [the] category woman has become one of the most foundational if contentious ones in contemporary feminist theory. The category derives from an early feminist notion that women are oppressed not by virtue of

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their class and race, but simply by the fact of their womanhood. That is, women are oppressed *as women*” (20).

However, Atwood’s treatment of gender in her fiction is beyond the restricted binary oppositions man/woman, centre/margin and victimiser/victimised. She believes in the plurality of women experiences and the difference in their positions in the system of power in society, she states in an interview with Geoff Hancock: “As for woman, capital W, we got stuck with that for centuries. Eternal woman. But really, ‘Woman’ is the sum total of women. It doesn’t exist apart from that, except as an abstracted idea” (Hancock in Ingersoll 101).

In fact, in Atwood’s fiction, gender is regarded as a continuous process of development that has an interrelationship with identity and the female body. Thus, in our study of Atwood’s three novels, we adopt the notion proposed by Rita Felski that regards gender as a process because it seems the most appropriate in analyzing Atwood’s treatment of gender politics. In *The Gender of Modernity*, Felski argues that “Gender is continually in process, an identity that is performed and actualized over time within given social constraints”(21). Similarly, Atwood does not present her characters as having a fixed stable female identity, rather she allows the reader to witness how they are shaped by external and internal factors, how their bodies are affected and why they behave in certain manners. Her female characters are far from fitting into stereotypical moulds for they present the complexity of human behaviour and sometimes its unexpected change under certain circumstances. In Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson’s words, “Atwood’s investigation of female subjectivity ranges from explorations of the female as victim, to representations of the dissembling, monstrous female. Throughout her writing, she reinvents the subject of ‘woman’, while also acknowledging the need to ‘take the capital W off Woman’” (22).

5.4.1.1. *Lady Oracle*:

Lady Oracle is an autobiography of the female protagonist Joan which resembles James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* because it starts with Joan as a child and moves to show how her identity as a writer is progressively developed and shaped, however, *Lady Oracle* is different because it is a gothic parody and its protagonist develops a multiplicity of identities, hence lives and narratives. In addition, Joan's state as a girl places her in certain positions that are closely defined by her nature as possessing a female body and consequently affects her body negatively. According to Leslie Cagan, "there is a social and political reason to who we are" (cited in Vron Ware 30) and the reasons behind Joan's multiple identities start from her family and her obesity as a child.

5.4.1.1.1. An Unwanted Obese Little Girl:

The social and familial reasons behind Joan's uneasiness with her female body and her perception of herself as a fat one even after losing weight start in her relationship with her mother as a child. Joan is raised by her mother who was not satisfied with her life and her state as a single mother though Joan's father was still alive. He left the family and returned when Joan was in school; however, the psychological power of influencing Joan was exercised only by her mother.

The familial atmosphere was never a secure one for Joan as she was deprived of recognition, love and support and above all she was psychologically harmed because of her obesity in childhood. As a child, Joan discovered that she was an accident and her mother blames her existence for her sadness, "You don't know what it was like, all alone with her (Joan) to bring up while you were over there enjoying yourself [...]. It's not as though I wanted to have her. It's not as though I wanted to marry you [...] had to make the best of a

bad job” (Atwood 82). Her feelings of being an unwanted child were strengthened by her mother’s treatment because she never gave her space to exercise any power in her childhood; instead she was an abusive controlling mother who tried to overcome her failure in life by shaping her daughter into a beautiful impressive girl that resembles a triumph rather than a human being. Joan is aware that her mother was never satisfied with her as a girl, a fact that lowered her self-esteem and influenced her image of her body shape:

Her plans for me weren't specific. They were vague but large, so that whatever I did accomplish was never the right thing. But she didn't push all the time; it wasn't that she was aggressive and ambitious, although she was both these things. Perhaps she wasn't aggressive or ambitious enough. If she'd ever decided what she really wanted to do and had gone out and done it, she wouldn't have seen me as a reproach to her, the embodiment of her own failure and depression, a huge edgeless cloud of inchoate matter which refused to be shaped into anything for which she could get a prize (67).

Joan’s mother enrolled her in a dancing class not for her child’s own pleasure but with the hope that she will lose weight and fit into the image of a slim girl to be considered beautiful. However, Joan quits the dancing class when her mother convinced Miss Flegg to give her daughter a dance and a costume of mothball instead of the butterfly like other girls. This gesture devastated Joan’s childish dreams and made her feel ashamed and hurt, an incident that made Joan see herself as less beautiful and worthy than other girls. Although the dancing scene might seem futile for adults but for the psychology of a child, it created an inferiority feeling that will accompany Joan throughout her life; a fact that is clear when the dance and the costume of the butterfly will reappear in later periods in her fantasies.

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Joan's gender identity is largely influenced by her body image. She underwent different stages of development and metamorphosis but the progress of her development has always been linked to her own image instead of the image of society. First, Joan suffered from her mother's disapproval of her obesity which affected her self-image and fixed the idea of having a fat body though she managed later to lose weight. As a child, Joan exercised power over her dominant mother by resisting her advice and control to lose weight. By eating more and gaining more weight, she felt she could overcome her and own her body. Molly Hite believes, in "The Other side of the Story" that "excess of body becomes symbolic of female resistance to a society that wishes to constrict women to dimensions appropriate" (131-132). The female body is compared here to a territory, a colonised land with her mother's aspirations, a land that Joan is trying to control and advance despite the devastating results.

. . . I was eating steadily, doggedly, stubbornly, anything I could get. The war between myself and my mother was on in earnest; the disputed territory was my body. . . I reacted to the diet booklets she left on my pillow, to the bribes of dresses she would give me if I would reduce to fit them. . . I swelled visibly, relentlessly, before her eyes, I rose like dough, my body advanced inch by inch towards her across the dining-room table, in this at least I was undefeated.
(Atwood 69-70)

Joan was marked by the image of "The Fat Lady" who performed in the freak show in The Canadian National Exhibition that she used to visit every year with her Aunt Lou and despite the fact that Joan did not see the show, she developed her own image of "The Fat Lady" that she continued to see in her fantasies whenever she becomes stressed, a symbolic appearance that shows Joan's own self image.

Joan reflects the impediments imposed on the female body and how a woman's identity is shaped by society in relation to her body shape. She is aware of the social codes of femininity that connect the female body to beauty and the male desire. As an obese teenager, Joan was never regarded attractive. She was supported by her Aunt Lou who gave her the tenderness and the advice that she missed in the character of her mother. Before her death, Aunt Lou left Joan a reasonable sum of money that she can get on condition that she loses weight. Aunt Lou's contribution in taking Joan to the next stage of her development is crucial; however her motives behind setting such condition are not explained in the novel. It seems that she wanted her to overcome her own feelings of inferiority, for it cannot be that she wanted her to be valued by others because Aunt Lou never cared about society's view or appearances.

5.4.1.1.2. A Double Body with Multiple Identities:

5.4.1.1.2.1. Louisa K Delacourt: Writer of Gothic Novels:

Joan reaches her second stage of development when she managed to lose weight and used the money she inherited from Aunt Lou to leave and settle in London. She encountered a Polish count that writes Nurse Novels and encourages her to write, so she started her career as a gothic romance writer under the name of Louisa. K. Delacourt. Although Joan entered into a relationship with the count and started earning money from her books, she continued to see herself as fat, an old failure she never realised she overcame. Her love relationships with men do not help her in having reconciliation with her body image and the gender role of a female lover. Despite the Polish count's contemplating admiration of her physical shape and his statements that she has "the body of a goddess", Joan continues to see herself as fat: "the outline of my former body still surrounded me, like a mist, like a phantom moon, like the

image of Dumbo the Flying Elephant super - imposed on my own" (216). Such feeling of being doubled continued to hint Joan throughout her life.

Joan's growing success as a writer of gothic romances threatened her relationship with the Polish count because she acknowledged the fact that he regarded her as his mistress and discovered that she cannot play the gender role he demands from her because he did not appreciate female intellectual capacities and categorised them in relation to his love demands as: wives and mistresses. The Polish count believes that "the mystery of the man is of the mind, where as that of the woman is of the body" (188). His view of the male mind's supremacy and the female body's beauty reflects the societal factors that led Joan to develop her double image of her body, the fact that led her to leave him for his traditional misogynist views.

5.4.1.1.2.2. Joan Foster: Lady Oracle:

When Joan realised that she must leave the Polish count, she met Arthur who is active in politics and who changes his political devotions and theories from time to time, a character who reflects Atwood's criticism of the hypocrisy of some political activists. Even his aim behind marrying Joan has social and economic motives: "Marriage itself would settle us down, and through it, too, we would be better acquainted. If it didn't work out, well, it would be a learning experience. Most importantly, we would live much more cheaply together than we could separately" (220). He seems like someone asking for a union of two parties or companies rather than a hand of a woman. Later, Joan realizes that her marriage is a deception and her husband is a controlling character like her mother. Arthur tries to enforce Joan into his own mould of femininity depriving her of having children, preventing her from wearing

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fashionable clothes and pushing her to cook for him while enjoying her failure as a cook. She remembers,

Arthur enjoyed my defeats. They cheered him up. He loved hearing the crash as I dropped a red - hot platter on the floor, having forgotten to put on my oven mitt; he liked to hear me swearing in the kitchen; and when I would emerge sweaty - faced and disheveled after one of my battles, he would greet me with a smile and a little joke, or perhaps even a kiss, which was as much for the display, the energy I'd wasted, as for the food. My frustration and anger were real, my failure was a performance and Arthur was the audience (234-35).

Joan's suffering from double body image and a multiplicity of identities are reinforced by her relationship with Arthur. She hides from him that she was obese in the past thinking that

What [Arthur] failed to understand was that there were really only two kinds of people: fat ones and thin ones. When I looked at myself in the mirror. . . . The outline of my former body still surrounded me. . . . I wanted to forget the past, but it refused to forget me; it waited for sleep, then cornered me...—I went to great lengths to prevent this. Though I was tempted sometimes, I resisted the impulse to confess . . . my early life and innermost self would have appalled him. It would be like asking for a steak and getting a slaughtered cow" (215).

She has also hidden her identity as a gothic romance writer while she was trying to play the gender role he designed for her, but when she stepped out of the mould he made for her and published a book of poetry entitled *Lady Oracle*, he became resentful, distant and threatening. Joan tried automatic writing, an experiment that helped her write *Lady Oracle*, however, the public and the critics thought that the poetry was about her relationship with her husband and

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started interpreting the book in autobiographical ways which provoked her husband who has become silent and hurt, an attitude that shocked Joan who thought: “I would catch him giving me hurt looks when he thought I was not watching. I couldn’t figure it out. I’d been expecting him to tell me the book was bourgeois or tasteless or obscure or a piece of mystification, but instead he was acting as though I had committed some unpardonable but unmentionable sin” (235). Joan’s relationship with her husband is not one of equally powerful partners. Her fear to tell him her past obesity and her career, her will to satisfy him by cooking and not having children show her submissiveness and his possession of all the power in their relationship.

Joan’s deceptive marriage and her husband’s resentful attitudes lead her to enter into a relationship with the Royal Porcupine who tries to take the place of Arthur, Joan’s relationship with the Royal Porcupine resembles an adventure in her gothic costumes because he gave her a space out of Arthur’s dominion; however, when he changed his appearance and expressed his desire to live with her, Joan decided to stop seeing him. She was aware of the motives behind her escape to the Royal Porcupine, “Why had Arthur driven me to it?... For some complicated and possibly sadistic reason of his own he’d allowed me to become involved with a homicidal maniac” (272). In addition to Joan’s problem of having different identities, the media started calling her Lady Oracle and people started writing her letters, a reaction that shows how a woman’s art is always considered as a mirror of her personal life rather than a creation.

Joan is constantly haunted by her past and by the figure of her mother who turns to be the woman in her poetry and the shadow she has seen in her experiment of automatic writing. As a woman, she has never possessed power to make difference in her life or stop living different lives as different personalities. When she felt threatened by phone calls and received dead animals on the steps of her door, she found another escape by pretending to commit

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suicide; However, she discovered that death does not set her free and that her past is still haunting her. The friends who helped her were charged of murdering her, her mother's figure continued to haunt her and a journalist found her in Italy.

Joan's suffering has always been due to her lack of self-esteem. She has never been accepted and appreciated by others for who she is including her mother and husband. She has always been given conditioned affection: her mother would have loved her if she managed to become a thin girl and her husband would have appreciated her if she lived as a submissive wife. She thinks: "I would never be able to make her happy. Or anyone else. Maybe it was time for me to stop trying" (330)

Being aware of her past, Joan decides to go back to Canada to face her past, however, there is hint in the novel that she will not continue in her escape to relations with men and writing Gothics, when she thinks,

I won't write any more Costume Gothics, though; I think they were bad for me. But maybe I'll try some science fiction...He's a nice man; he doesn't have a very interesting nose, but I have to admit that there is something about a man in bandage...Also I've begun to feel he's the only person who knows anything about me. Maybe because I've never hit anyone else with a bottle, so they never got to see that part of me. Neither did I, come to think of it. It did make a mess; but then, I don't think I'll ever be a very tidy person. (208)

Ending the story with this passage keeps the reader asking questions about how Joan will resolve her problems, but her ideas give hints that she will leave Arthur for "he loved her under false pretenses" (354) and she will start writing science fiction while she seems interested in that reporter who made her see a strength in her personality she did not recognise before. Joan is not interested in the reporter but she is liberated from her fear to be despised,

she feels a kind of security with him because he knows everything that she has been hiding for a long time.

5.4.1.2. *The Handmaid's Tale*:

Gender in *The Handmaid's Tale* is closely related to power and it is redefined by the Totalitarian system according to the needs of the urgent situation of the Gileadian society where the human race is in danger of extinction. Indeed, it is given paramount importance in the system of Gilead because the female body has acquired a rescuing function due to the widespread infertility. Gender identities of the citizens of Gilead have been redefined by the political system that controls, like most dystopia, all human aspects, however, in the case of Gilead things are pushed to the extreme for survival measures. For the aim of rescuing the human race, the human nature has been modified through a process of governmental measures that eliminate those who go out of the dictated order. Furthermore, the practice of some activities that were naturally human before the establishment of the system is outlawed.

In Gilead, gender identity is reshaped and deformed by the political system and has become a political duty instead of being a social construction based on the nature of the body. Humans become categorised according to the duties they have in society.

5.4.1.2.1. Gender Categories:

-Males:

They are responsible for maintaining order in Gilead from the highest rank of the commanders to the Eyes who are responsible for surveillance and the Angels which is the name used for soldiers and guards. Their duties are strictly dictated by the regime and every action is watched.

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-Females:

Women are the most affected category in the new state because their maternity is regarded as the only rescue to the wide rise of infertility that is threatening Gilead. Like in other novels by Atwood, the female body is treated in patriarchal terms for only women were supposed to be fertile or infertile while doctors know that most commanders have become infertile. Based on the major purpose of their existence which is reproduction, women are divided into categories including:

-The Aunts:

They represent the most powerful category of women in the new regime; they are given many privileges to fit their duty of indoctrinating the Handmaids which resemble a brain washing. For example, they wear electric cattle prods on leather belts, they are the only category of women that is allowed to read and they supervise the supply of Handmaids for procreation through indoctrinating fertile women in the red centre, modifying certain scriptural texts and old slogans to enforce the new ideology of the regime and even punishing the women who go out of order. They represent the most effective and dangerous embodiment of female power because they work to convince Handmaids that the new society is a safe one that liberates them from the male abuses they suffered from in the past because pornography, rape and cosmetics, in other words all the practices that insult the female nature are censored. The Aunts show how dangerous and oppressive a woman's society can be. In "Feminist Dystopia", Barbara Ehrenreich writes,

Only on the surface is Gilead a fortress of patriarchy, Old Testament style. It is also, in a thoroughly sinister and distorted way, the utopia of cultural feminism... There is, for example, no pornography in the new world (even the Bible is kept under lock and key); there are no cosmetics or other artifices to

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insult the natural female form, and the punishment for rape is to be torn to bits by a mob of women. Men, including physicians, have been barred from the scene of childbirth, which is now assisted by a ritual circle of chanting handmaids. In the Red Center where handmaids are trained for service, the presiding “Aunts” indoctrinate their charges in a twisted proto-feminist ideology: women were once subject to hideous abuse by men, but now they are “free” from all that, while men have been reduced, for all practical purposes, to stud service. (79)

It is significant to notice that the Aunts are given power only to guarantee the success of the new order; they are used as a strong tool because when women are the oppressors of women it is impossible to resist or rebel.

-Marthas and Ecowives:

A term taken from the Bible, Marthas are domestic old servants who work in the household of the ruling class and ecowives is an invented term to refer to poor working women in lower classes.

-Unwomen:

An invented term to refer to an attitude rather than a biological nature; it refers to the women punished for going out of order, infertile women and old women like the protagonist’s mother. It is striking how the system is able to declare a woman as unwoman and punish her to clean toxic waste in the colonies, a fact that exemplifies how gender has become politically and socially constructed, retained and dispossessed.

- Handmaids:

As the most important category of women under the new regime, for survival purposes, the handmaids are the most affected females by the change in perspective towards

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what a gender role is for a female. The only condition for being fit for a Handmaid's role is fertility. Thus, motherhood has become the major cause of a female's existence and importance. Handmaids become treated as biological treasures, not humans with a past and an already constructed identity. According to Sharon. L. Wilson,

In fact, pollution, in particular radioactivity, has greatly reduced fertility and thus birth rates. A great number of children are born deformed and do not survive, or are sent somewhere out of sight. For these reasons childbearing has assumed a sort of sacred value, though it also paradoxically justifies women's oppression and degrading to mere body: "We are two legged wombs, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices" (160).

To become Handmaids, fertile women undergo a process of indoctrination to form a new gender identity that works under a system of polygamy to give the commander's families children. Before constructing the new identity, the old one is erased including the name and the past: "You are the transition generation, said aunt Lydia. It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make. It is hard when men revile you. For the ones who come after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties with willing hearts. She did not say: Because they will have no memories, of any other way" (Atwood 127). The Aunts know that they have to guarantee the obedience of the handmaids by erasing their former identities and any feeling of nostalgia for their past lives. Consequently, the handmaids are given new names in relation to their possessors, the commanders. For example, there are names such as **offred**, **ofwarren** and **ofglen**. They are taught by the Aunts using the modified or appropriated scriptural references that convince them of the sacred role they are given in the new state and the punishment they will face if they disobey.

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In the teaching process the handmaids are shown documentaries and films about the past to convince them that the horrors they suffered from in the past such as male sexual and violent abuse, no longer exist. In addition, they are dressed in red uniforms that cover all their bodies and wear white head wings that prevent others from seeing their faces and prevent direct eye contact. They also assist the executions of individuals who go out of the law in what is called Salvaging while the crimes are never publically mentioned in an excuse that the system keeps them secret to guarantee that they will not be imitated by others. In the process of their indoctrination, the Handmaids become sure that their only hope of survival is obedience and bearing children for the commander's families, children they will not be allowed to raise or have familial relations with because they will be dispatched to another household.

The indoctrination process assisted with the executions and the system's effective surveillance work together to shape this new gender identity that centres on a deformed, frustrated, depressive motherhood. In her article "Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: Resistance through Narrating", Hilde Staels states that "People's identity is supposed to coalesce with the coded concepts and the predicated state by which they are defined. Handmaids are supposed to merely think of themselves 'as seeds', as objects with a procreative function that should save the world from threat of sterility, as 'two-legged wombs' (457).

The new gender identity requires the Handmaids to undergo repetitive ceremonies of impregnation by the commanders in the presence of their wives. The Handmaids become the possession of the couple and besides their productive activity; they are not allowed to do any effort except going shopping for the household. The effectiveness of the process of changing

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people's perceptions and attitudes of the things they used to in the past is clear in the scene when Offred goes shopping with another Handmaid Ofglen and they see Japanese tourists, a view that has become strange for both of them although they know that they used to be like the girls they see. Offred describes them:

Their heads are uncovered and their hair too is exposed, in all its darkness and sexuality. They wear lipstick, red, outlining the damp cavities of their mouths, like scrawls on a washroom wall, of the time before. I stop walking. Ofglen stops beside me and I know that she too cannot take her eyes off these women. We are fascinated, but also repelled. They seem undressed. It has taken so little time to change our minds, about things like this. (Atwood 38)

Offred is aware of the change in her view of the world around her, but what she does not know is that even her perception of her body has been altered by the system. She has been disassociated from her body because Handmaids are not allowed to use cosmetics, to take off their body hair and to seek any physical pleasure.

When Offred starts seeing the commander and playing scrabble with him, in other words coming closer to him as a man, she becomes ashamed of her body's hair and the impregnation ceremony becomes personal for both of them for the commander almost touched her face with his hand, a gesture that may lead his wife to send Offred to the colonies. Offred secret meetings with the commander make her understand how the system succeeded in disassociating people, being males or females, from their bodies for even the commanders were doing their duties in the impregnation ceremonies in a mechanical way.

-The wives:

They are the wives of the officers in higher ranks and the commanders. Being responsible for organising the household, they treat the Handmaids as their servants and have

a kind of hostility towards them because they are intruders into their familial life and their marital relationships. They take the children produced by their Handmaids as their own to name them and raise them since the Handmaids are only surrogate mothers. They have the authority to denounce any action that is regarded by the system as illegal and send a Handmaid to the colonies.

As a futuristic dystopia, *The Handmaid's Tale* presents a shift in power possession and exertion, a redefinition of the norms and the expected role of each individual in the newly established regime. Although, the Aunts cooperate with the regime to subjugate the Handmaids, they succeed in redefining the majority of their identities using a fallacious argument that they are enjoying a new kind of security and freedom for "There is more than one kind of freedom said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of the anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are given freedom from. Don't underrate it" (Atwood 35), a statement that reflects how the new society is altering people's perceptions of the world only to guarantee their surrender and obedience.

5.4.1.3. *The Penelopiad*:

As a rewriting of Homer's *The Odyssey*, *The Penelopiad* does question many of Homeric archetypal representations including the heroic image of Odysseus, the heavenly beauty of Helen and the revered fidelity of Penelope. Being a feminine retelling of a long celebrated poem that influenced the Western culture and contributed to the continuity of many patriarchal conceptions concerning the maintenance and exertion of power and the archetypal representations of women in Western literature, *The Penelopiad* has to be a story by the dead.

The Penelopiad puts into question the silenced image of the female characters in the literary tradition and exposed the true nature of these women characters that are far from the

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cultural representations that persisted for a long time in Western culture. *The Odyssey* is challenged on thematic and formal aspects: besides the paratextual and intertextual elements that reflect the challenging nature of *The Penelopiad*, there are other elements that highlight its criticism of *The Odyssey* for its contribution to the preservation of many patriarchal stereotypes in culture. For example, the monodiegetic narration is replaced by a heterodiegetic one as the female characters are given voice, however, significantly only when they are dead.

Atwood's wit appears in her retelling of *The Odyssey* by female characters who are dead, in other words freed from the dictations of patriarchy and male heroism. However to be free they are disembodied and speak as ghosts from the Underworld. Here again, the female voice is disassociated from the body in order to be able to tell its story in another dimension that goes beyond the control of the living. Penelope's voice and those of the twelve hanged maids come as a means of resistance to the Homeric version of their stories. In her article "Postmodern Voices from beyond: Negotiating with the Dead in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*," Rutha Dlapkauskaitė contends that "in *The Penelopiad*, death embodies the distance in time which enables the words of the previously silent women (Penelope and her Maids) to contest the traditional and, by implication, male interpretation of the Grecian myth" (143). *The Penelopiad* forces the reader to get involved in the process of story construction because there is a kind of plurality of vision that results from the narrative voice and *The Odyssey*'s constant presence as a source text. Atwood's interplay with Homer's text as the original story is tricky for she does not cast away the male and female representations in *The Odyssey*; on the contrary, she leads the reader to question them.

5.4.1.3.1. The Mythic Odysseus versus the Tricky Liar:

The Odyssey centres on the heroism of Odysseus who has been glorified as a mythic character and symbol of power and courage who was able to defeat monsters and mortals and seduce Goddesses. He has become a mythic figure in Western culture and his fame in literature persisted for a long time. However, *The Penelopiad* represents him as a less significant character compared to his wife Penelope and the hanged maids. In addition, the power is no longer possessed by him in the Underworld, for if he was able to hang the twelve maids in his life, now he is being tried by them in the Underworld. In addition, the silenced wife who found herself obliged to wait for him for twenty years and pretend to believe in his heroism, now she is the one who tells the story and possesses the power of the word which reduces Odysseus to a “tricky liar”:

He was always so plausible. Many people have believed that his version of events was the true one, give or take a few murders, a few beautiful seductresses, a few one-eyed monsters. Even I believed him, from time to time. I knew he was tricky and a liar, I just didn't think he would play his tricks and try out his lies on me. Hadn't I been faithful? Hadn't I waited, and waited, and waited, despite the temptation – almost the compulsion – to do otherwise? And what did I amount to, once the official version gained ground? An edifying legend. (Atwood 2)

The fact of representing Odysseus as a liar by the closest person to him is a way of demystifying his image. It is disturbing to the reader who starts questioning the validity of Homer's representation. In addition, the distribution of power is different in the Underworld because the twelve slaves he killed upon his arrival to Ithaca without listening to their defence are now haunting him and organising his trial.

5.4.1.3.2. The Flawless Faithful Penelope versus Penelope the Prissy:

The Odyssey represents Penelope as the flawless wife who has wisdom and patience to wait for her husband Odysseus for twenty years while raising his son and turning down the propositions of many suitors. Her fame reached the living and the dead in the Underworld as she has become the ideal image of a wife and mother. In fact, *The Odyssey* contributes to the endorsement of the archetypal representations of women in literature as silent submissive characters whose existence and value depend on their devotion and servitude to their husbands who possess all the power in society and Penelope in particular became a revered character in literature since Homer's portrayal of her character.

Many critics agree on her status in literary tradition and mythology including Robert E Bell who thinks that "Penelope would probably get the vote as the most admirable woman in mythology" (348). Penelope is mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Plutarch's *Moralia* and Pausanias's *Description of Greece* and the Roman writers who mention her are Ovid in *Heroides* and Hyginus's *Fabulae*. According to the patriarchal codes of ancient Greece and Rome, the character of Penelope is reflective of the gender role any wife is supposed to play in her life. According to Thornton, she is "one of the great women", a woman who "acts just as a mother, daughter and wife is bound to act in a patriarchal society" (93, 113-114).

However, in modern times, when critics and writers started resurrecting the mythical characters from modern, postmodern and feminist perspectives, they started attributing other qualities to these characters and interpreting what seemed as weakness as a strength by analyzing their behaviours in relation to the environment they lived in. for example, Mihoko Suzuki believes that Penelope is not a weak character, on the contrary, she "successfully defends herself against becoming an object of exchange: she not only foils the suitors' attempts to win her but also insists on her right to accept Odysseus back to their marriage

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bed” (76). In the same vein, Atwood represents Penelope as a complex character by offering the reader three contradictory images: the one by Homer which is mentioned in the novel’s epigraph, the one by Penelope herself as she is given voice and the one by her twelve hanged maids.

The strength of Atwood’s representation of Penelope lies in the fact that she takes her from the archetypal image that persisted for centuries and gives her the narrative voice to tell her own story from the Underworld to modern readers. The story Penelope recounts is far from the aggrandised version told by Homer and her character is closer to a real woman trying to deal with the obstacles she faces in her life in a clever way. Penelope decides to retell her story as a reaction to the legend of her faithfulness:

And what did I amount to, once the official version gained ground? An edifying legend. A stick used to beat other women with. Why couldn’t they be as considerate, as trustworthy, as all-suffering as I had been? That was the line they took, the singers, the yarn-spinners. Don’t follow my example, I want to scream in your ears—yes, yours! But when I try to scream, I sound like an owl.
(Atwood 2)

A legend, she believes men glorified and valued because they can use it as a model for other women to follow, a means of subordinating them without taking into consideration their suffering and sacrifice.

In addition, Penelope knows that rumours questioning her fidelity spread among people for a long time and decides to tell her story from the Underworld “now that all the others have run out of air” (2), Penelope feels free to tell her story. In her article, “Five Ways of Looking at the Penelopiad,” Coral Ann Howells comments on Penelope’s story telling by writing,

Penelope's narrative, however, though conversational and engaging, tells us a great deal more than the realistic details of her everyday life, for this is her story of resistance to all those other stories, both the eulogies and the scandals, which have been imposed upon her. Now at last it is time for her to spin her True Confessions, weaving her web of words as deftly (and as duplicitously) as she wove her father-in-law's shroud. Though dead, her voice is remarkably alive with its ferocious wit and caustic humour. (Howells 10-11)

Besides Penelope's self portrayal, the hanged maids give the reader a counter representation of her character and a counter narrative of the events recounted by Homer and Penelope. In fact, Atwood's device is reflective of her innovation as a writer because situating Homer's narrator, Penelope and the maids in a parallel position is establishing justice in a literary work which has become formally and thematically political.

5.4.1.3.3. Shameless, Reckless Creatures versus Sacrificed Victims:

As slaves, the twelve maids who have been hanged by Odysseus are minor characters whose death is undermined in Homer's *The Odyssey*. According to Sigrid Renaux, "Yet whereas in Homer there are no references to the story of these maids – for, as slaves, their tale would not constitute a noteworthy subject, epics being restricted to feats of war... Atwood makes the maids present their true and unknown story in a chorus in several chapters, and as a counterpoint to Penelope's narrative" (69). The maids represent the women who did not own their bodies, their lives and their free will.

However, in *The Penelopiad* they become major characters defending themselves, exposing Penelope's plot and haunting Odysseus for his crime. The reader starts taking their words into consideration when Penelope feels sorry for them and tries to hide that she was an

accomplice with Odysseus's nurse to sacrifice them and hide what they know forever. She thinks "Dead is dead, I told myself. I'll say prayers and perform sacrifices for their souls. But I'll have to do it in secret, or Odysseus will suspect me, as well" (Atwood 160).

The maids have been victims in their lives because they did hard work, spied on the suitors and were raped by them. Some scholars including Renaux believe that in addition to killing the suitors, the maids' hanging is part of Odysseus regaining of power over his state as a kind of exertion of power over his household.

5.4.2. Protagonists as Women Writers:

A recurrent concern in Atwood's works is writing as a female activity. Many of her protagonists find refuge in storytelling either as a means of resistance, defence or for its cathartic function. Her own interest in women as writers and targets of criticism and media attention drives her to portray many of her female protagonists as storytellers particularly of their own memoirs, writers of novels or poetry. However, it is worth noting that women's writing in Atwood's novels is closely linked to death, female victimisation and survival.

5.4.2.1. Death:

Most of Atwood's narrator's are speaking from death either to defy death and convey a message or they have a relation with the dead. Even Atwood herself admits that there is a close relationship between death and storytelling, a subject that fascinates her and reappears in her fiction and poetry. In "Negotiating with the Dead", she maintains, "All writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and fascination with mortality—by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld and to bring something or someone back from the dead. You may find the subject a little peculiar. It is a little peculiar. Writing itself is a little peculiar" (140). Atwood's women writers are liberated by

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death and their voices become heard and reconsidered. In “Five Ways of Looking at the Penelopiad,” Coral Ann Howells believes that “This obsession with the transgression of boundaries between the living and the dead, which is one of the markers of Gothic sensibility, has characterized Atwood’s poetry and fiction from its beginnings, and for her the creativewriting process itself is haunted by intimations of mortality.” (7).

In *Lady Oracle*, only after her faked suicide and presumed death, Joan becomes able to evaluate her life, to acknowledge the restrictions that led her to lose herself in a desire to satisfy people around her. She starts telling her story to the reporter she hit with a bottle and she assembles all her identities that she kept separate and hidden from people. Joan’s autobiography appears when she speaks from death, away from the dictations of her gender role as a wife of Arthur and as a woman writer who suffers from the results of sudden celebrity. In addition, Joan realizes that her career as a writer of Gothic romances aggravated her suffering from multiple identities and her escape into a world of fantasy, the world inhabited by her characters. As a result, Joan decides to stop being an escape artist and start writing science fiction.

Similarly, the protagonist of *The Handmaid’s Tale* is heard only a long time after she is dead. It was impossible to hear her voice when she was alive and even the nature of her narrative and its preservation are specific to the novel as a dystopia. Offred is able to tell her story only through recollections of the past before the establishment of Gilead and the present which is her life as a Handmaid under the new regime. Since women do not have access to literacy, Offred means of resistance is her memory which she tries to refresh every night as a defense measure to keep herself disassociated from the situation she is living. When Offred succeeds to flee and survive because of Nick’s help, she recounts her story in the form of remembered episodes recorded on cassettes of music and songs that were at the time censored

by the theocratic dictatorship. However, the reader is not given access to her story only more than a century later when the cassettes are discovered by a historian Professor Pieixoto and transcribed into a tale which validity is under question in the Gileadean Studies' Twelfth Symposium. Although Offred's story reaches her presumed listener or reader that she used to believe in order to survive, it has become depersonalized and objectified by the historian in his way of looking for historical evidence.

Third, *The Penelopiad* is Atwood's successful and major attempt to make the dead speak. Penelope's long silenced voice is heard and the marginalised woman is given primary role in the novel which alters between her autobiography and the maids' voices which also tell their story of victimisation. Being a ghost in the Underworld, Penelope is free to tell her version of many events in *The Odyssey* and comment on characters such as her husband Odysseus and her cousin Helen sometimes in an ironic way. She is telling her own story and going out of the stereotyped image of the faithful wife as an image rather than a person who deserves to be heard. Her autobiography includes her childhood, her daily life as a wife rearing a child alone and as a woman who tries to cope with her husband's long absence and the suitors' attempts to take over his estates. Howells analyses Penelope's narrative in reference to Paul de Man's ideas about autobiography writing:

Penelope's story belongs to Atwood's favourite genre of fictive autobiography, a duplicitous if not an impossible genre as Paul de Man reminds us, for autobiography whether fact or fiction is always a discourse of 'self restoration' in the face of death and the power of mortality, and therefore subject to distortion through the chosen rhetorical mode of presentation. 'Our topic deals with the giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, *figure*, figuration, and disfiguration.' Though Penelope is strictly speaking faceless, it

is her words which restore her identity through her narrative of self-justification. (11)

Atwood's revision of the female experience seems to go beyond death, time and space, she resurrects her protagonists to liberate them or she makes them reconnect with the dead to control their own stories. She writes in "Negotiating with the Dead," "All writers learn from the dead ... Because the dead control the past, they control the stories ... so if you are going to indulge in narration, you'll have to deal, sooner or later, with those from previous layers of time" (160), thus in her terms all sorts of story writing become 'negotiating with the dead'.

5.4.2.2. Female Victimisation and Survival:

Victimisation and survival are two important themes in Atwood's criticism and fiction. When she published *Survival: A Thematic Guide of Canadian Literature*, she contributed to the recognition of Canadian literature worldwide and traced a recurrence of victim/survivor images in Canadian literature; She writes "Stick a pin in Canadian Literature at random, and nine out of ten times you'll hit a victim" (39). Moreover, Atwood divides victim situations into four categories:

to deny the fact that you are a victim; to acknowledge the fact that you are a victim, but to explain this as an act of fate, the dictates of Biology, the necessity decreed by History, or Economics, or the unconscious, or any other large general power or idea; To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim but to refuse to accept the assumption that the role is inevitable; to be a creative non-victim. (14).

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Most of Atwood's protagonists reach the last position when they start telling their stories. They may appear at any other previous position but the moment they start voicing their suffering and resisting the already set order, they become "creative non-victims".

In *Lady Oracle*, Atwood parodies the victimisation of the female protagonists in Gothic romances and shows how Joan identifies herself with her female characters. She is able to overcome her obsession with satisfying others and having different secret identities in a way to escape others' rejection. When Joan acknowledges that she is not obliged to live as a victim, she reaches her state of creativity and decides to tell her story to the Canadian reporter, to stop being an escape artist and to start writing science fiction.

The protagonist of *The Handmaid's Tale* is different in her struggle to survive under the regime of Gilead. While any access to any artistic activity is denied to Handmaids, Offred tries to survive through memory. During the day, she becomes the victim in position two, in other words, she knows that she is a victim but she acknowledges the fact that this due to the new circumstances under which everything is reshaped and redefined including human nature. However, at night, she tries to remember the past to survive by her memories of her husband Luke and her daughter. Part of Offred's survival process is her denial of the loss of her beloved husband and daughter and her constant trial to reconstruct what happened to both of them. Finally, when Offred is helped by Nick and Mayday to escape, she reaches her position as a "creative non-victim" as she starts recording her story on tapes and addressing the receiver of her message as you: "By telling you anything at all I'm at least believing in you. I believe you're there. I believe you into being [...]. I tell, therefore you are" (279).she believes that someone will find out what happened to her and her voice will be finally heard.

Similarly, Penelope kept silent for a long time when legends about her faithfulness spread and rumours about her reputation were repeated by people. However, she decides to

retell her story as a means of resistance from the Underworld because there she is free. She tries to override her passivity and imposed silence for a life time and retell her story of suffering and waiting for the hero whose heroism she doubts in her autobiography.

Most of Atwood's female protagonists, not only in the aforementioned novels, tell stories of the silenced, the repressed, the confiscated, the harmed and the victimised female body. By telling their own stories they take possession of their lost selves and cease to exist as victims.

5.5. The Female Appropriation of Literary Genres: Hypertextual Practices

When it comes to genre divisions and analysis, Atwood is one of the most inventive, tricky and experimental writers especially in her fiction as she blears many of the generic boundaries creating at every step of her career challenging works that question the audience categorisation of her as a writer or her fiction. She is known for her "exceptional talent for combining intellectually challenging writing with a high readability" (Nischik 1). Indeed, She does not only challenge traditional concepts on the thematic level, more surprisingly, with every novel she publishes, she challenges literary norms, tradition and shows a unique artistic ability of aesthetic renovation and diversity. In his introduction to *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin and Oryx and Crake*, J. Brooks. Bouson comments on her artistic play with genres when he writes:

An author who delights in "genre crossovers," Atwood has long taken her readers' breath away with her own deviousness and inventiveness and audacity and yes, at times, perversity. In her characteristic voice, which ranges from the serious and poetic to the wryly ironic and deeply sardonic, Atwood self-consciously writes and rewrites—often with subversive, parodic intent—

traditional and popular fictional forms and formulas: the wilderness quest novel; the female Gothic and harlequin romance; the *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman*; the prison narrative; the detective novel and spy thriller; the dystopian novel; the feminist memoir; the incest survivor story; the historical novel; war, vampire, ghost, and science fiction stories. (12)

It is worth noting that Atwood's "genre crossover" (130), as she calls it in "Spotty-handed Villainess," is not for the sake of experimentation and the production of art for its aesthetic value only, however, it is an artistic activity that criticises through satire, demystifies through irony, and defies through parody. In a single work, she may create bafflement when it comes to genre categorisation because for Atwood both the personal and the formal are made political.

5.5.1. *Lady Oracle*: A female Gothic:

Within the different hypertextual practices categorised by Genette, parody is considered as a self-conscious transformative device that lies along with travesty, in the area of direct and complex rewritings of the hypotext. However, in *Lady Oracle*, it is necessary for us to analyse the use of parody by Atwood in the context of metafiction and for the purpose of exposing its political ends as a postmodern literary practice directed at criticising certain notions in literature, particularly gothic romance writing and its representation of the female victim.

5.5.1.1. Metafiction and Parody:

It is evident that Atwood's *Lady Oracle* stands within the arena of metafictional writing; it is one of her novels that gives paramount importance to fiction writing in every step of its plot development and analyses the process of writing hand in hand with its

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character development. In fact, Patricia Waugh's definition of metafictional writing applies to the novel's nature:

Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. (2)

The protagonist of *Lady Oracle* is a woman writer who allows the reader, as a first person narrator, to witness her struggle with gothic romance writing and her concerns about the relationship between her art and reality. On the novel, Hutcheon writes, "In *Lady Oracle* Atwood further and more explicitly explores the artist as both the instigator of the creative process and, indeed, as a product of her own art. Here parody and self-parody meet in a feminist exploration of the art/life paradoxes in the context of the notion of female subjectivity (145). Our narrator frequently transcends the boundaries between the fictional and the real in an escape to the world of fantasy, identifying herself with her gothic female characters, enacting the scenes and more severely playing their roles as female victims. For our writer, Joan, creating fiction acquires a cathartic function because it allows her to escape from the frustrations of her marriage and the struggle with feelings of inferiority and rejection due to her past obesity.

In summarising previous studies, Andrea Stolz offers a list of the literary techniques often employed by metafictional narratives. We notice that most of them are used by Atwood in her novel *Lady Oracle* including: the employment of a self-reflexive narrator that is Joan, the discussion of the writing process and the exposition of its difficulty in relation to gothic

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romances and poetry, the reception of Joan's art and its impact on the readers. In addition to the use of intertextuality and myths which have been discussed in details in Chapter Four and the use of narratives within narratives such as Joan's different gothics and book of poetry and finally the use of parody.

In her book *A Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon defines parody in political terms when stating:

Parody, then, in its ironic 'trans-contextualization' and inversion, is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the background text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signalled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. The pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humour in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual 'bouncing' (to use E. M. Forster's famous term) between complicity and distance. (32)

Using parody as a transformative technique in *Lady Oracle* has its inscriptions in the political goal of the novel as "a female gothic gone wrong," in the narrator's words, because it exposes how gothic novels contribute to the continuity of women victimisation and their escape into a literature that projects their suffering and presents as normal their oppression. Joan contemplates on her books thinking:

These books, with their covers featuring gloomy, foreboding castles and apprehensive maidens in modified nightgowns, hair streaming in the wind, eyes bulging like those of a goiter victim, toes poised for flight, would be considered trash of the lowest order. Worse than trash, for didn't they exploit

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the masses, corrupt by distracting, and perpetuate degrading stereotypes of women as helpless and persecuted? (Atwood 34)

We believe that Linda Hutchen's definition of parody describes Atwood's politics behind the use of such technique in her transformation of the gothic romance that existed as genre for a long time and found most of its devotees in women readers. It uses motifs such as mirrors, mazes, threatened heroines, dangerous settings and villains, but in a psychological way that ironies their original employment in gothic romance as a genre.

In Genettian terms, Atwood transforms the genre of the gothic romance by writing a parody of a female gothic, thus using the traditional norms of the genre, but by transforming them, she manages to criticise this genre and its psychological implications on women readers. In the context, Eleonora Rao comments in her article "Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* writing against Notions of Unity" that "Atwood's ironising of women's Gothic Romance fiction makes *Lady Oracle* a compelling and unsettling novel. Writing within and against the limits of the genre, exploiting and challenging its norms, she interrogates its stereotypes of womanhood as she explores the compensatory function of so-called escapist literature"(212).

We believe that the end of the novel is important due to its open nature and its difference from the traditional happy endings of gothics. Joan as a writer of gothic romances discovers that the world of fantasy she used to escape to resulted in a multiplicity of identities, in a self-victimisation. Joan's realisation that she is the one responsible for her victimisation makes her decide that she will no longer write gothic romances, she will no longer seek to satisfy others; however, she will start writing science fiction, another problematic genre when it comes to reality, fantasy and art.

5.5.2. *The Handmaid's Tale*: A female Dystopia:

As a dystopic novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* is another of Atwood's successful attempts to defy the male-centred tradition in literature. Situating her dystopia in an area of female subjectivity reverses the order of the importance of the public and the personal in dystopia as a genre. In reference to Genette's hypertextual transpositions, Atwood's makes two major shifts in the mode of dystopia to feminise it as a genre. She uses two types of transmodalisation:

5.5.2.1. Intermodal Transmodalisation:

Although, the story of the Handmaid originates in the form of a narrative mode, it was transformed by two historians from recorded remembrances of her life before and after the establishment of Gilead into a novel. The written form originally does not exist and Offred technically speaking is not a literary narrator; however, the transcription of her voice on paper gives birth to *The Handmaid's Tale* as a book.

5.5.2.2. Intramodal Transmodalisation:

Atwood makes transformations in the genre of Dystopia when she gives the narration to her female protagonist, thus the discourse of the marginalised and the feminine becomes central in the novel because the world of the dystopia is presented from a feminine subjectivity. Unlike previous dystopia in the literary tradition that focus on the external, the ideological and the governmental, Atwood's dystopia emphasises the internal and the subjective. This appears in the lack of sufficient information concerning the political system of Gilead and the questioning of the story's validity by the two historians who feel frustrated by the personal discourse of Offred's tale and they call for objectivity and detachment from

moral judgement. Howells drives attention to this stylistic shift by Atwood and its political implications when writing:

With *The Handmaid's Tale* her choice of a female narrator turns the traditionally masculine dystopian genre upside down, so that instead of Orwell's analysis of the public policies and institutions of state oppression, Atwood gives us a dissident account by a Handmaid who has been relegated to the margins of political power. This narrative strategy reverses the structural relations between public and private worlds of the dystopia, allowing Atwood to reclaim a feminine space of personal emotions and individual identity, which is highlighted by her first-person narrative.

In addition to the change in the narrative voice in Atwood's dystopia, other characteristics of the genre have been altered to fit the writer's political aims behind writing the book. They include:

5.5.2.3. Power distribution:

While previous dystopias present hierarchies of power that give authority to one limited class at the expense of other major classes, thus resulting in the binary opposition oppressor/oppressed or victimiser/victimised, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* presents a different distribution of power. Any reader noticing the book's interest in the female subjectivity and women issues under the new regime would expect the novel to present its exertion through the dichotomy victimiser/victimised to refer to male-female relationships. However, the giving an excess of importance and power to the female body and its breeding capacities led women to become central instead of marginalised. Simone De Beauvoir's famous statement in *The Second Sex* links the biological nature to power distribution when she argues, "For him she is sex—absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with

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reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other” (806). However, Atwood reverses Simone’s order for the new society, that is becoming a woman’s society eliminating men’s sexual abuse, makes fertile women at the centre, a valorisation the resulted in their victimisation and personal lives’ marginalisation because they are treated as precious possessions.

Although the novel exposes the misogynist attitudes towards women, it is not feminist; rather it is wider in its humanist and social scope. On the institutional level, power is distributed among male and female characters, for example, in addition to the commanders, the Aunts, although at a lower rank, are given authoritative powers and access to literacy to serve the system. On the personal level, many of male and female characters are victimised including the commanders, the wives and the Handmaid’s whose personal relationships and even human nature are transformed by the system as an urgency measure to face the danger of extinction. In his article, “*Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,*” Amine Malak contends that:

while Atwood poignantly condemns the misogynous mentality that can cause a heavy toll of human suffering, she refrains from convicting a gender in its entirety as the perpetrator of the nightmare that is Gilead. Indeed, we witness very few of the male characters acting with stark cruelty: the narrative reports most of the violent acts after the fact, sparing the reader gory scenes. Even the Commander appears more pathetic than sinister, baffled than manipulative, almost, at times, a Fool. (7)

Although some readers may perceive the novel as feminist, it is more concerned with the human and social condition when many of human ecological and religious practices reach their extremes.

5.5.2.4. Transvaluation:

Such process, according to Genette's theory, includes a devaluation and counter-valuation of the characters that are affected by the change of the system of values to which they belong. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the portrayal of the characters is different from traditional dystopias because it does not conform to their presentation of characters either as victims, oppressors or heroes. Atwood's characters, however, are double and sometimes flexible. For example, Offred is not the typical victim represented in a dystopia, she is submissive at the day and resistant at night when she starts her journey of retaining the self through memory and her relationship with Nick. In addition, unlike traditional heroes of dystopia who fail to resist the system, Offred, with the help of Nick manages to flee, to become a survivor and make her voice heard. Similarly, Nick is neither an accomplice with the system nor a rebel; he plays both roles and becomes at the end of the novel a romantic hero who rescues Offred. Finally, the commander himself does not fit in the category of the harsh, cruel oppressor, portrayed by traditional dystopia. Through his encounters with Offred, he wins the readers' sympathy and understanding as they understand how he has become victimised by the system he helped to establish.

Another shift in the conventions of the genre is the use of the section "Historical Notes" which is disturbing to the readers accustomed to traditional dystopias. The narration becomes heterodiegetic with the introduction of the historical discourse that adds historical details about Gilead and tries to undermine the human side of Offred's narrative; an ironic

ending that takes Atwood's readers into an area of satire predicted by Swift's "proposal" in the epigraph.

5.5.3. *The Penelopiad*: A Female Epic:

Atwood's rewriting of *The Odyssey* came as a surprise to the academia because she challenged one of the most celebrated literary works in the West. The surprise resulted from the many transformations she made and the success of the combination that resulted in what Sigrid Renaux called a "female epic" (69). In addition to the paratextual elements, discussed in details in Chapter Three, that situate *The Penelopiad* in a zone where the epic and a fragmented hybrid narrative correlate to form a parodic postmodern novel, we mention *The Penelopiad*'s hypertextual relations with *The Odyssey*. Atwood appropriates the genre of epic by making the following transformations that Genette terms transpositions:

5.5.3.1. Continuation:

Atwood's motive behind rewriting *The Odyssey* in particular is her belief that there are two gaps left by Homer's text. The latter, by nature is devoted to masculine heroism and the hanging of the maids or Penelope's character is considered futile compared to Odysseus's adventures. In "The Myths and Me," She explains her desire to "explore a few dark alleyways in the story that have always intrigued [her]" (38). Moreover, Atwood chooses to add two left periods, Penelope's childhood and the one after the death of the characters and the description of their ghosts in the Underworld.

5.5.3.2. Transvocalisation/ Transvaluation:

Atwood changes the narrative voice from the third person used in *The Odyssey* to the female-first person narrator used by both Penelope and the maids; a narrative technique that makes the novel more personal and female-centred. The shift in narration is accompanied by

another change of the values to which the characters belong for the patriarchal discourse of male heroism is replaced by a female subjectivity and the epic is turned into a novel.

5.5.3.3. Heterodiegetic Transformation:

In *The Penelopiad*, the characters are ghosts after their death and the setting is the Underworld and a court where the trial of Odysseus takes place.

5.5.3.4. Pragmatic Transformation:

It accompanies the change in setting and time because some of the events are changed. For example, in *The Odyssey*, Penelope did not recognise her husband when he entered the palace disguised, but in *The Penelopiad*, she instantly recognises him but does not reveal it because she thinks “It’s always an imprudence to step between a man and the reflection of his own cleverness” (137). In addition, the change in events is devaluating Odysseus as many of his adventures are presented by his wife in an ironic tone that undermines his heroism and brings it closer to the reality of modern readers instead of myth. In fact, by writing *The Penelopiad* Atwood has reached a stage of subverting myths and classics in her fiction.

5.6. Conclusion:

Margaret Atwood’s writing of fiction is an attempt to appropriate the different literary genres to the expression of women’s issues. She makes her texts enter into a dialogue with the literary tradition through transformations, adaptation and recontextualisation, yet they remain woman’s texts designed to challenge normality in writing fiction. For Atwood, the formal becomes political in an endeavour to make women’s writing deal with the human condition in general rather than feminist issues.

General Conclusion

Women's writing in Canada appeared late compared with other parts of the world, however, it came mature and supported to jump centuries of denial and misogynist criticism. Canadian women writers profited from the maturity of the critical scene, the governmental support to constitute a national identity, by extension a national literature, and the editorial welcoming of women texts as contributions to the development of a Canadian national literature. Names such as Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood became important in the evolution of Canadian literature as founders instead of reactors to an already existent male-dominated tradition.

Among the three mentioned writers, Atwood stands as the most studied and internationally acclaimed woman writer. Her contribution to the widespread recognition of Canadian literature is undeniable because as a critic, a poet and a novelist, she helped in publicising for a distinct Canadian literature and cultural identity that were until recently confused with American ones. Moreover, many critics believe that she helped Canadians themselves develop self-consciousness about their literary and cultural identities and acknowledge their bound relation with Canada's nature. Since her first publications, Atwood attracted critical recognition from different areas of literary criticism and started to grow into a literary celebrity that gained media attention as well. Atwood's production started in the sixties and continued until today varying between novels, short stories, poems, screen plays, critical studies, books for children and radio scripts. Her oeuvre has created a challenge for critical analysis and classification because it has been set in an evolution that needs revision and reconsideration and indeed, many books written on her were revised and republished in later editions.

As a woman's texts, Atwood's novels are highly political, multilayered while standing in an area between generic distinctiveness. Most of her novels fuse the personal and the political in the context of a female subjectivity and blur different genres on formal and stylistic levels. Moreover, some of her novels do not only blur generic boundaries but create new genres that challenge the old established ones. Although, many critics tried to attribute the feminist ideology to her writings for the correspondence of their issues with that of second-wave feminism, Atwood resists any allegiance to the movement. Her interest is wider; it is power politics or the possession and exertion of power in all aspects of human relationships. As she confirms her state as a political writer, any reader of her works notices that she is political in her own terms or according to her own definition of the concept because she is far from being interested in the institutional or the governmental.

The sixties and the seventies witnessed a concern in Atwood's work with the female issues including the creation of art, the search for identity, the female body and self-image in relation to the other, in addition to social issues particularly gender politics and a deep interest in the environmental. For example, *Lady Oracle* was published in 1976 as a parody of gothic romances and a reflection of the negative effects such genre has on women including the persistence of the image of woman as victim. As Atwood's most rewritten novel, *Lady Oracle* takes her concern in the issue of women's literature to different levels of presentation ranging from the textual to the thematic and the symbolic.

Atwood reached her second stage of development as an engaged writer during the eighties. She became highly interested in women's creation of art either visual or literary and the two fundamental issues that will reoccur in her whole oeuvre: power politics and gender politics. During this stage she published her famous dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale* in 1985, a novel that imagines the world in America in the 80's if certain misleading extremist religious,

scientific and environmental practices continued and reached their aims. The critical attention brought by Atwood's sixth novel is due to her successful entrance into an area of literary production which has been dominated by male writers for a long time. As a psychologically horrifying novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* continued to be a success until today and has been transformed into a film years after its publication and a TV series in 2017.

The third stage in Atwood's career is characterised by a writing that is highly experimental and politically engaged while challenging some of the well-established conventions and celebrated texts in the canon. From the nineties onwards, Atwood started rewriting history and mythology in texts that blear generic boundaries or transform some subgenres in fiction. At this stage, she published her ultimate challenge of male domination of literary expression and representation, *The Penelopiad* which came as a formal and ideological rewriting of one of the most influential texts in Western culture: Homer's *The Odyssey*.

Atwood's literary talent often results in highly complex yet readable texts that enter into a dialogue with the literary tradition and the contextual environment that resulted in their production; they are often multilayered and politically engaged. Our analysis of the aesthetic aspect of Atwood's three novels reveals some of the political functions of the formal in her fiction. The paratexts of Atwood's books are given importance by the writer who used to design illustrations for her first poetic publications. She employs the visual side of the cover with the title, the epigraphs and the notes to reach one of three functions of the paratext we have found in analysing her three novels. First, the paratextual elements present in *Lady Oracle* help the reader anticipate its generic nature as a novel while its illustration visualises the protagonist's psychological suffering that results from her self-image of double identity in relation to her female body. In addition, the choice of the title is political in first hand because

it reveals Atwood's criticism of the genre of gothic romances through parody and metafiction and her exposition of the critics' role in underestimating women's art and enforcing biographical readings on it.

Second, the paratext of *The Handmaid's Tale* serve to conceal, and then modify the generic category of the novel. Its title and illustration do not provide the reader with any hint that the novel belongs to futuristic fiction; on the contrary, they guide him to anticipate an old tale. However, the epigraphs, the intertitles and the "Historical Notes" modify the old conventions of writing dystopia and create what we attempted to call "cyclic dystopia" which links human experience in different contexts and ages. Third, the paratext of the third novel under analysis modifies its generic category. The title *The Penelopiad* directs the reader to the area of epic poetry; however, the text is a hybrid of different generic categories assembled and bleared to form a postmodern novel that parodies the Greek epic. It includes Penelope's narrative interspersed by a chorus line by the twelve hanged maids who narrate the story in various forms such as lyrical poetry, theatrical performances, an anthropological lecture and a trial's videotape. The controversial relationship between the novel and its paratext is primarily political because it serves in offering a multiplicity of truth that characterises most of Atwood's stories and a questioning of the ideological archotyping of female portrayal that persisted in the Western tradition for centuries. The novel's paratext is tempting for its exposing of the challenging relationship between its representative aspects and the novel as text referent, on one hand, and the Greek epic as intertextual reference on the other hand.

Atwood's aesthetics outvoice the political by their resistance to and challenge of the already known in literature. Her writings enter into a dialogue with the literary tradition such

as in *Lady Oracle*, with religion like in *The Handmaid's Tale* and with mythology in *The Penelopiad*. Such is accomplished on the formal level through the use of self-reflexive female narrators and intertextual references. Both techniques are employed to expose issues of power politics, gender politics and women's creation of art particularly writing literature.

Intertextuality is a phenomenon present in all Atwood's works including the fictional and the poetic. She often makes references to myths, fairy tales, folk tales and literature. She uses intertextuality to offer parallel images, to criticise others and to contextualise some events. The functions of fairy tales as intertexts in Atwood's fiction are discussed in details in Sharon Rose Wilson's *Margaret Atwood's Fairy Tale Sexual Politics*. However, the intertextual relations in the three novels under investigation differ in frequency and complexity. Some intertexts reappear in the same work to have a different function everytime while others are merely constituting a thematic bound with a source text.

We believe that intertextuality in the three novels have three main functions: first, it offers parallel images of the characters signaling stages in their development and their defiance of some stereotypical images in culture . Such is done by making allusions to fairy tales and literary characters. For example, in *Lady Oracle*, *The Red Shoes* reappears in different contexts in the novel constituting a parallel between the novel's protagonist Joan Foster and the heroine of the fairy tale and the movie with the same title. Moreover, dancing becomes a primary motif which exposes the patriarchal constraint of the female body and its relation to artistic expression. *The Little Mermaid* is also used to portray the protagonist's psychological development and her recognition of the failure of her marriage as she compares herself to the mermaid who suffered and lost happiness because she does not have a soul. In other contexts, Joan is compared to literary figures such as the female characters in Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott", Thomas Hardy's *Tess of D'Urbervilles* and to one of

the wives of the Bluebeard. Indeed, Atwood's allusions to fairy tale and literary characters serve characterisation or expose the conditions those women live in.

Similarly, in *The Handmaid's tale*, allusions to fairy tales and literary works provide comparison with their characters or with the conditions they live in. Offred the protagonist and all the Handmaids that belong to her category are compared to *Red Riding Hood* while the redefinition of gender role is signalled by Offred's statement that the red shoes they wear are not for dancing which symbolises the Handmaids' devotion to motherhood and the system's prohibition of any artistic expression.

The second function of intertextuality in Atwood's three novels is criticism of ideology or culture. It is manifested in the form of quotations and is largely related to the public rather than the personal. For example, most of the quotations used in *Lady Oracle* are linked to issues related to the production of literature as a female activity and to the male-dominated criticism that this literature and women writers face after publication. Moreover, as a dystopia, *The Handmaid's Tale* is full of intertexts from various resources including the Bible, literary works, psychological and political theories and popular culture. The novel envisions life under a future theocratic dictatorship which makes the primary sources quoted the Bible. However, the quotes used from the Bible do not retain their connotative meaning, or the meaning meant in the source text. For examples, some names taken from the Bible undergo deliberate transformations to serve the political aims of the regime including entrapping people in a circle of fear, servitude and obedience.

Furthermore, intertextuality in *The handmaid's Tale* is a complex phenomenon because it goes beyond textual reference as some of the Biblical texts are imitated in reality using literal or modified meanings for political reasons. For instance, some texts become used as laws while others as ceremonies of impregnation or punishment. Other references to

political, literary and theoretical resources have direct political messages in the novel particularly the novel's epigraphs taken from Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and Islamic Sufism to signal its satirical and ironic aspects.

Intertextuality has another function in the three novels under analysis which is criticism of archetypal images in the literary tradition. In *Lady Oracle*, there are passages from Joan Foster's gothic romances that show how such type of literature promotes the persistence of the image of woman as victim. In addition, the epigraphs taken from Homer's *The Odyssey* in *The Penelopiad* are used to question Homeric archetypal representation of women in his poem and to direct the reader's attention to the gaps left by his narrative. Those gaps justify Atwood's choice of rewriting *The Odyssey* from a female perspective. In fact, intertextuality in *The Penelopiad* helps establish hypertextual relations with *The Odyssey* by offering two images that are challenged and transformed by Atwood.

As a novelist, Atwood considers herself political, however, in her own terms. She is much interested in the possession and exertion of power in all forms or relationships whereas, she refuses to be aligned with ideological orientations and believes that her literature is a lens transforming the image of society to the reader without reflecting it mimetically. We have found a similarity between her view of the role of fiction and the concept of "the broken mirror" proposed by Pierre Macherey in *The Theory of Literary Production*. Among the recurrent issues that are closely linked to Atwood's discussion of power and continue to reappear in her fiction are the politics of gender. Significantly, Atwood's discussion of gender politics is not confined to feminist treatments of the topic limiting it into binary oppositions such as woman/man, the centre/ the margin which represent old dichotomies of power. Instead, she considers gender as a continuous redefinition of the self and its role in relation to

the other that can be a mother, like in *Lady Oracle*, a political system such as in *The Handmaid's Tale* or a whole culture like in *The Odyssey*.

The most appropriate definition of gender that proved its adequacy in the analysis of gender politics in Atwood's novels is based on Rita Felski's concept that regards gender as a process in her work *The Gender of Modernity*. Indeed, the characters in Atwood's fiction resemble flexible humans rather than images and stereotypes representing categories in society. For example, the female characters are always in a process of self-redefinition in relation to certain internal and external factors including power exertion, the female body's image, the creation of art and the quest for the self. In *Lady Oracle*, Joan Foster enters into a struggle with her body's image and a quest for the self due to her mother's belief in the female stereotypes that regard thin women as beautiful. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, gender is modified for survival purposes to save the human race and women become oppressed by other women who belong to the category of aunts that possesses power in the system. Finally, *The Penelopiad* presents the character of Penelope as a complex unreliable narrator who is far from the image of the faithful wife presented by Homer.

Another major issue in Atwood's novels is women's creativity particularly, storytelling which takes several forms in the three novels. However, it is significant how storytelling in the three novels is closely related to death. The three protagonists' voices are heard only after death. A phenomenon that has roots in the writer's own belief that storytelling has a relationship with death and this idea has been discussed by Atwood in "Negotiating with the Dead". In the three novels, death liberates the female narrators who use their voices as a means of resistance, survival and defence. Moreover, storytelling for the three female protagonists acquires a cathartic function. In *Lady Oracle*, Joan Foster tells her whole story to the Canadian reporter who finds her in Italy and realises her identification with her female protagonists while living as an escape artist and a victim. Second, In *The*

Handmaid's Tale, Offred's means of survival and detachment from the female subjection in Gilead is through imagining a listener and telling him her story. Finally, Penelope criticises Homer's representations of male heroism and female archetypal images in *The Odyssey*.

The three analysed novels expose Atwood's constant attempts to experiment with genres in literature. She deliberately blears generic boundaries or transforms the conventions of writing particular genres such as the epic and the dystopia to meet her political ends. In the three novels, metafiction and parody are used in a female context by self-reflexive narrators whose narratives unveil the silenced upon, heal the confiscated and victimised body and liberate the constrained in the culturally defined. *The Handmaid's Tale*, is contextualised in an area of female subjectivity by giving importance to the personal instead of the public and the narrative voice to the female protagonist whose story originates in an oral recorded form. Consequently, the marginalised female discourse becomes central in the genre of dystopia.

Other transformations in the genre of dystopia include the shift in power distribution because the traditional hierarchies of power are reversed in the novel and the victimiser becomes the victim. Second, the characters' portrayal does not conform to traditional images since most of them are flexible and double. Another shift in the conventions of the genre is Atwood's addition of "Historical Notes" which makes the narration becomes heterodiegetic with the introduction of the historical discourse that attempts to analyse Offred's tale objectively by excluding any moral judgment. Atwood ironically contextualises her dystopia in an area of satire and criticises the historical treatment of human experience.

Atwood's rewriting of *The Odyssey* also resulted in a feminised epic in the form of a parodic postmodern novel. Atwood's female appropriation of the genre of epic is reached through a number of hypertextual transpositions that adding two periods to *The Odyssey*, Penelope's childhood and the characters' ghosts in Hades. Second, Atwood uses a first-

person female narrator accompanied by another change of the values to which the characters belong for the patriarchal discourse of male heroism is replaced by a female subjectivity and the epic is turned into a novel.

Margaret Atwood's writing of the female subjectivity in different literary forms makes her a writer who resurrects the dead, challenges the ever standing and defies the agreed upon set of order either in society or literature. She has managed to keep her art at the thresholds of literary expression for it is neither within nor out of the literary tradition. Being constantly renovated, her fiction including the previously discussed novels as examples among many other works stands as a female appropriation of literary genres aesthetically and politically.

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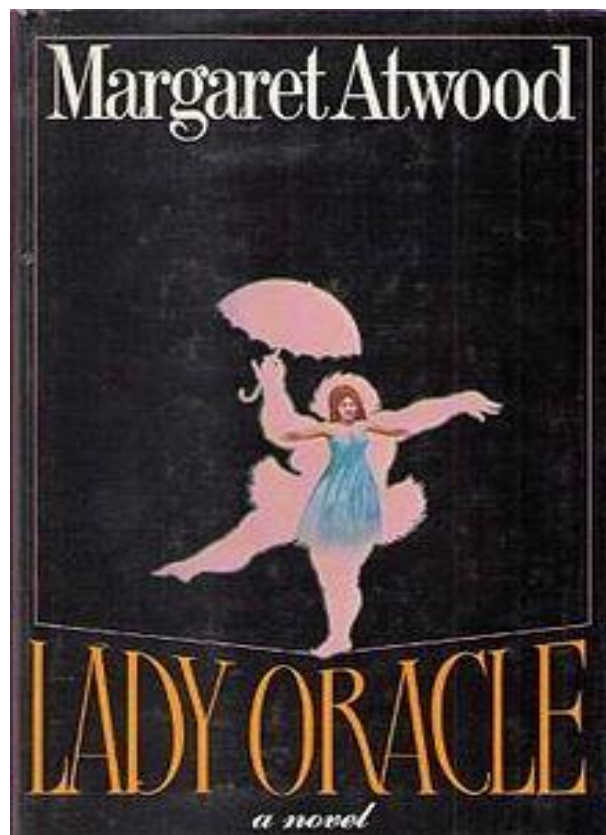
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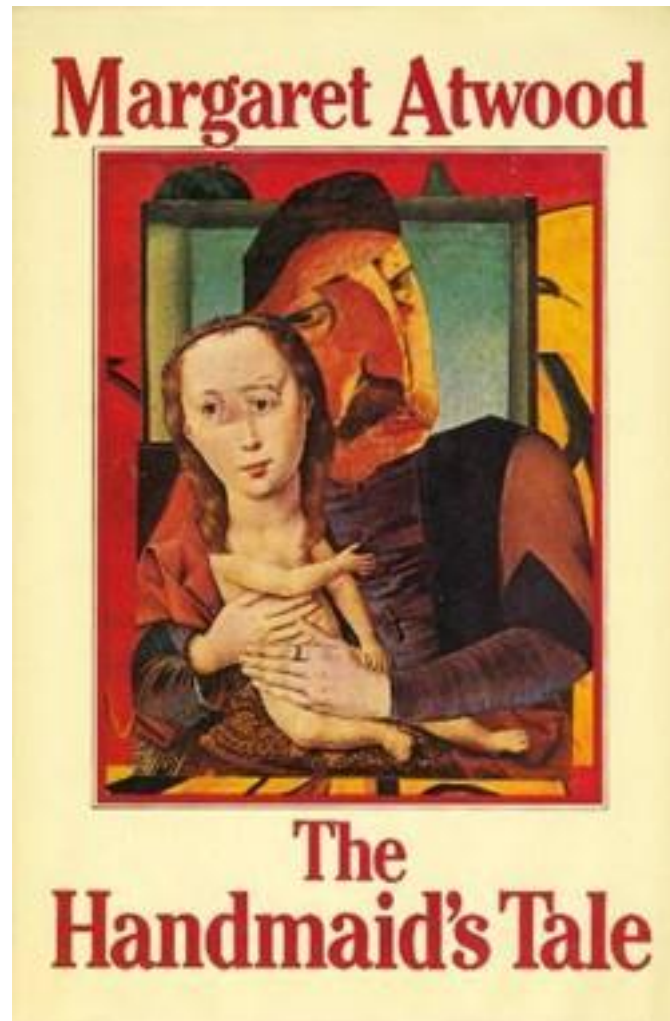
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Appendices

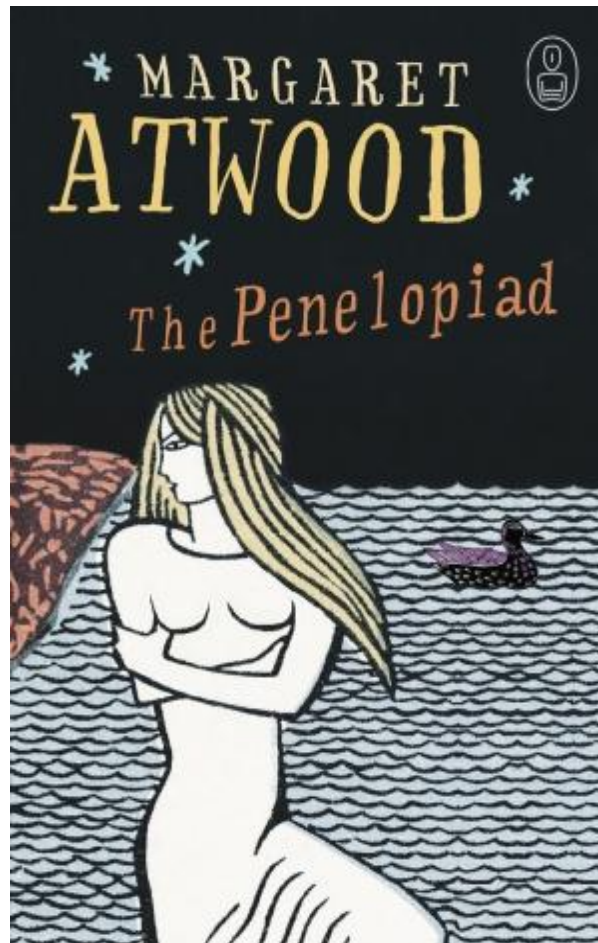
Appendix A: The Front Cover of Lady Oracle



Appendix B: The Front Cover of *The Handmaid's Tale*



Appendix C: The Front Cover of The Penelopiad



Appendix D: Taxonomy of Image-Text Relationships

Each entry includes: a number indicating its order in the taxonomy; the name of the concept (function or relationship); a scope note (SN) that explains or defines the concept; lead-in terms based on other researchers' names for the same concept; and sources for the concept. Occasionally, the scope note includes a separate note headed "Note:" that relates the concept to other concepts as necessary to insure appropriate use. The numbers in the sources sections refer to research listed in Table I. If the term is based on the stage 2 analysis in this paper, it is marked EM. Any missing information is labeled "Not given".

A Functions expressing little relation to text

A1 Decorate

SN: make the text more attractive without aiming to produce any real effects on the reader's understanding or memory. Note: can be applied even if other functions are used.

Lead-in terms: attract interest; draw attention; gain attention.

Sources: 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 19.

A1.1 Change pace

SN: interrupt continuity by shifting to a different activity.

Lead-in terms: novel stimulus; provide something new or unusual.

Sources: 9

A1.2 Match style

SN: image and text match along same stylistic dimension.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: EM.

A2 Elicit emotion

SN: encourage emotional response from reader through display of content or style that is especially arresting or disturbing.

Lead-in terms: tone or mood inducing; create a specific emotional atmosphere designed to engage the reader.

Sources: 19, 20.

A2.1 Alienate

SN: create tension between image and text through contrast in style or mood. Note: for content-based differences, use B3.2 (contrast).

Lead-in terms: clash; contradict; counterpoint; text and image collaborate to communicate meanings beyond the scope of either one alone; diverge.

Sources: 3, 4, 16, 17.

A2.2 Express poetically

SN: suggest the spiritual qualities or effects of the object depicted.

Lead-in terms: not given

Sources: 23,

A3 Control

SN: exercise restraining or directing influence.

Lead-in terms: direct; regulate activities or course.

Sources: 9.

A3.1 Engage

SN: hold the attention of the reader. Note: if method of engagement is primarily emotional, then use A2 (elicit emotion).

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 24.

A3.2 Motivate

SN: encourage some response from reader. Note: if desired response is emotional in nature, then use A2 (elicit emotion).

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 9.

B Functions expressing close relation to the text

B1 Reiterate

SN: restate with minimal change or interpretation.

Lead-in terms: direct; double, reinforce; one source provides a visual or textual restatement of another; repeat; symmetrical; transcribe.

Sources: 2, 11, 15, 16, 17, 23.

B1.1 Concretize

SN: make explicit. Use for captions especially. “Concretize” a textual reference to a thing or concept. Note: by definition, this action produces a shorter or less detailed account than B1.3 (describe) and a less complex account than C1 (interpret) or C3.2 (model).

Lead-in terms: make the unseen visible.

Sources: 12, 15, 19, 23.

B1.1.1 Sample

SN: give a sense of the concept by providing an example, although not a paragon or ideal.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: EM.

B1.1.1.1 Author/Source

SN: use when author or source of image is given within a caption.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 20.

B1.2 Humanize

SN: represent elements within the text in the form of a living being; thereby making the text more accessible.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 15, 23.

B1.3 Common referent

SN: text and image share same symbolic source of meaning.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 9.

B1.4 Describe

SN: represent or give an account by definition; concretize. By definition, this action produces a longer or more detailed account than B1.1. Note: do not use for captions that merely identify.

Lead-in terms: discuss; present in detail for examination or consideration; convey ideas; impart or communicate by statement, suggestion, gesture, or appearance.

Sources: 23, 24.

SN: translate numeric data into a visual representation.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 19.

B1.6 Exemplify

SN: present a paragon that captures the essential meaning of a concept. Note: this code is applied to an image-text pair when it is used by the advertiser to

present a given product line.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 7, 9, 23.

B1.7 Translate

SN: convert from one form to another.

Lead-in terms: symmetry; text and image repeat the same content;

represent; reinforce by repeating written content in visual form.

Sources: 3, 6, 11.

B2 Organize

SN: form into a coherent unity or functioning whole. Includes advance organizers.

Lead-in terms: make coherent; organize or structure text.

Sources: 9, 12, 15, 20.

B2.1 Isolate

SN: select and separate from others.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 9, 20.

B2.2 Contain

SN: keep within limits. Includes Venn diagrams, flowcharts, timelines, and advance organizers.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 20, 23.

B2.3 Locate

SN: set or establish in a time or place.

Lead-in terms: establish setting; indicate time, place, era; stage setting;

images or text introduces or sets the scene for the other.

Sources: 2, 19, 20, 22.

B2.4 Induce perspective

SN: encourage reader to see things in their true relations or relative importance. Note: more complex than B2.3 (locate).

Lead-in terms: agenda setting; stage setting.

Sources: 18, 21, 22.

B3 Relate

SN: these terms refer to processes intended to bring out concepts contained wholly within the text. Functions classed under C2.1 (analogize) and C2.2 (contrast) use concepts outside the text to explain and interpret.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 20.

B3.1 Compare

SN: make explicit intended elements of comparison between objects depicted in text.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 6, 9, 23.

B3.2 Contrast

SN: make explicit intended elements of contrast between objects depicted in text.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 6.

B3.3 Parallel

SN: image shows the same action or state in a different context than that

presented in the text.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: EM.

B4 Condense

SN: reduce to essential elements.

Lead-in terms: simplify; reduce to basics or essentials.

Sources: 9.

B4.1 Concentrate

SN: bring the most critical information to the reader's attention. Note: reduces text more than B4.2 (compact).

Lead-in terms: reduce. Some aspects of text are ignored to emphasize others.

Sources: 4, 12.

B4.2 Compact

SN: represent succinctly. Note: reduces text less than B4.2 (concentrate).

Lead-in terms: summarize; tell or reduce to an abstract, abridgement, or compendium; make concise.

Sources: 12.

B5 Explain

SN: make plain or understandable. Note: use only when original text is followed closely; if external constructs are used to explain by means of comparison or contrast, use terms under C2.1 (analogize) or C2.2 (contrast).

Lead-in terms: clarify; make comprehensible.

Sources: 1, 5, 10, 15, 23.

B5.1 Define

SN: determine or identify the essential qualities or meaning.

Lead-in terms: elucidate; explicate.

Sources: 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 12, 23.

B5.2 Complement

SN: one mode helps the other to convey the message.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 3, 16, 22.

C Functions that go beyond the text

C1 Interpret

SN: provide illustrations of complex ideas in concrete form. Note: provides a lesser degree of interpretation than C3.2 (model).

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 1, 11, 15.

C1.1 Emphasize

SN: provide force or intensity of expression that gives impressiveness or importance to something.

Lead-in terms: underscore; make evident.

Sources: 9, 23.

C1.2 Document

SN: provide factual or substantial support.

Lead-in terms: instruct; provide with authoritative information or advice.

Sources: 9, 13, 19.

C2 Develop

SN: set forth or make clear by degrees or in detail.

Lead-in terms: amplify; expand (as a statement) by the use of detail or

illustration or by closer analysis; elaborate; expand something in detail; enhance, one medium amplifies the meaning of the other; expand, express at length or in greater detail; extend, provide additional details; specify, bring out information about the story embedded in the text; supplement.

Sources: 1, 2, 3, 4, 16, 22, 23.

C2.1 Compare

SN: emphasize points of similarity between image and text. Note: unlike B3 (relate), the point of reference rests outside the original meaning of the text.

Lead-in terms: analogize; create a resemblance in some particulars between things that are otherwise different.

Sources: 9.

C2.2 Contrast

SN: emphasize points of difference between image and text. Note: unlike B3 (relate), the point of reference rests outside the original meaning of the text.

Lead-in terms: clash, contradict, text and image are in opposition for a rhetorical purpose; counterpoint, add new information, creating a wholly different narrative thrust; different viewpoint, differing as to a position from which something is considered or evaluated; diverge; oppose, add new information to provide depth or insight; juxtapose.

Sources: 2, 3, 4, 16, 17, 22.

C3 Transform

SN: recode into concrete form; relate components to each other; provide organization to facilitate recall. Note: introduces more interpretation than C1 (interpret), C2.1 (analogize), and C2.2 (contrast).

Lead-in terms: code; perform a mnemonic function and make the text

more readily available for processing into memory.

Sources: 10, 11, 12, 15.

C3.1 Alternate progress

SN: the text and illustrations “take turns” in progressing the story.

Lead-in terms: not given

Sources: 3, 4.

C3.2 Model

SN: provide a description or analogy used to help visualize something that cannot be directly observed. Note: provides a greater degree of interpretation than C1 (interpret). Use this when a more specific model code does not or cannot capture the function shown.

Lead-in terms: correspond; provide links between reader’s pre-existing knowledge and new ideas within text; create metaphor.

Sources: 4, 6, 9, 12.

C3.2.1 Model cognitive process

SN: provide visual representation of abstract process.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 6, 9, 12.

C3.2.2 Model physical process

SN: provides visual representation of material or mechanical process.

Lead-in terms: not given

Sources: EM.

C3.3 Inspire

SN: using the text as a starting point, the illustration veers away to introduce new content that adheres to the spirit of the original story.

Lead-in terms: not given.

Sources: 4.

ملخص

إن هذا البحث يعنى بدراسة ثلاث روايات لمارغريت اتوود و المتمثلة في السيدة العرافة، حكاية أمة و أسطورة بنيلوبي باعتبارها كتابة نسوية. تنتمي الروايات الثلاث إلى أصناف أدبية مختلفة و تعكس مراحل مهمة في تطور اتوود كامرأة كاتبة. تقوم هذه الدراسة بتحليل الجانب الجمالي الفني و أوجه التناص الموجودة في الروايات المذكورة كما أنها تقوم بتحليل التغيرات التي أدخلتها اتوود على الأصناف الأدبية الثلاثة بهدف كشف الأهداف السياسية وراء الاستملاك الأنثوي للأصناف الثلاثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة النسوية، جماليات النص، محاذية النص، التناص، النصية المتفرعة، ديستوبيا ، رواية الرعب القوطي، الشعر الملحمي، السياسة.

Résumé

Le présent travail de recherche étudie les trois romans de Margaret Atwood : *Etincelle*, *La Servante écarlate* et *L'Odysée de Pénélope*, considérés comme une écriture des femmes. Les trois romans appartiennent à différent sous genres marquant un niveau important dans le développement de l'écriture d'Atwood come une écriture de femme. Cette étude analyse l'aspect esthétique et intertextuel des romans cités en haut. Elle examine les transformations des trois sous genres chez Atwood : le gothique, le dystopique et l'épique, pour atteindre ses objectifs politiques.

Mots Clés : écriture des femmes, esthétiques, paratextualité, intertextualité, hypertextualité, le dystopique, le gothique, l'épique, la politique.

Abstract

The present research studies three novels by Margaret Atwood which are *Lady Oracle*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Penelopiad* as woman's texts. The three belong to different generic categories and signal important stages in Atwood's development as a woman writer. This study attempts to analyse the aesthetic and intertextual aspects of the aforementioned novels. It examines Atwood's transformations of the three subgenres: the gothic, the dystopia and the epic to uncover the political aims behind their female appropriation by the writer.

Key words: women's writing, aesthetics, paratextuality, intertextuality, hypertextuality, dystopia, gothic romance, epic, politics.